

Prevalence of Risk Factors and Lifestyle Choices Associated with Increased Cancer in Participants in Trinidad and Tobago

L Gardiner, L Maharaj, M Mohammed, M Niles, L Ramsingh, M Seegobin, M Simon, M Surajbally, A. Vaillant

¹Department of Para-Clinical Sciences, Faculty of Medical Sciences, The UWI

Lyvan.gardiner@my.uwi.edu

Angel.Vaillant@sta.uwi.edu



Introduction

Cancer has been identified as the second leading cause of death and has created an immense challenge for health care systems and expenses throughout the region. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cancer incidence will increase from 2015 to 2035, and cancer mortality throughout this period will increase by 67%. This research project outlined the socio-demographic risk factors and lifestyle choices known to increase the risk of developing various forms of cancer that are present in the population of Trinidad & Tobago. Knowledge of these risk factors will allow members of the public to evaluate their lifestyles. Subsequently, they can determine if they are putting themselves at risk for certain malignancies, since different types of cancers have specific socio-demographic factors and lifestyle choices associated with them.

Objective

To determine the prevalence of risk factors associated with cancers in the population of Trinidad and Tobago:

- To explore the prevalence of demographic factors that increase the risk of developing cancer
- To investigate lifestyle choices that increase the risk of cancer among participants

Methodology

- This cross-sectional study documented the prevalence of risk factors for cancer among demographics and lifestyle choices of Trinidadian participants.

Participants aged 18 and older with no personal history of cancer were selected by stratified random sampling.

An online questionnaire was created using the SurveyMonkey platform and distributed via social media, inviting eligible persons to participate.

The data was analyzed and descriptive statistics were generated using SPSS 27

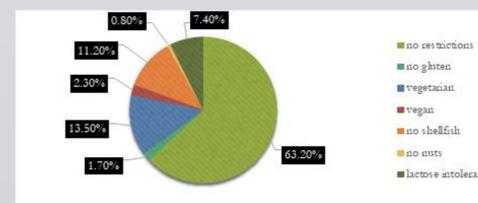
Results

FIGURE 1: BAR CHART SHOWING AGE GROUPS OF PARTICIPANTS



DATA REGARDING LIFESTYLE CHOICES

FIGURE 2: PIE CHART SHOWING DIETARY RESTRICTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

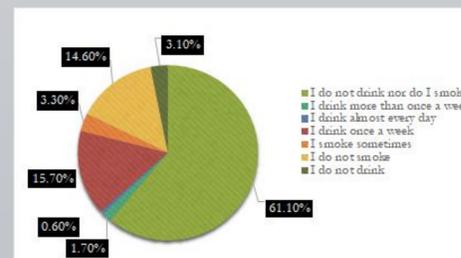


- 29% of the population was overweight/obese.
- 191 persons exercised a few times a week.
- Majority had no chronic diseases, though hypertension was the most prevalent, affecting 14.3%.

TABLE 1 SHOWING KEY DIETARY CHOICES OF PARTICIPANTS

Dietary Choices	Percentage of Study Population (%)
Smoked Foods	23.0
Red Meat	20.3
Fast Foods	27.7

FIGURE 3: PIE CHART SHOWING DRINKING AND SMOKING HABITS OF PARTICIPANTS



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- 478 valid responses were received.
- Females comprised 72% of the population while males comprised 28%.
- More than half the participants, 65%, had a family history of cancer.

Discussion

Upon analysing the socio-demographic and lifestyle risk factors among the study group, it was found that modifiable factors such as diet and obesity were more prevalent. Associations between non-modifiable factors such as family history of cancer and ethnicity were noted. Risk factors that were found include:

- RACE:** Afro-Trinidadians reported the highest percentage of individuals with a family history of cancer, putting them at an increased risk of developing those cancers.
- AGE:** Age has been cited as a risk factor for several cancers. Persons aged 55 years and older are at an increased risk for cancers such as melanoma, colon, stomach, liver, breast, prostate, ovarian and cervical.
- DIET:** Most persons had no dietary restrictions, making it more likely they would develop unhealthy diets. Additionally, at least 20% of persons consume red meat and smoked foods often, which has been shown to increase the risk of developing colon, stomach and prostate cancer. A chi square test showed an association between age and dietary choices, revealing that the participants' ages influenced their dietary choices.
- OBESITY:** Obesity, particularly associated with colon, prostate, liver, gliomas, endometrial and cervical cancer, affected 137 persons. Exercise however, is linked to a decreased risk of breast, colon, prostate, endometrial and stomach cancer. 191 persons reported exercising a few times a week.
- ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION:** 0.6% of respondents consume alcoholic beverages almost every day. However, 15.7% do so once per week, though it should be noted that the risk depends on the type of cancer as well as other lifestyle and demographic factors. For example, research showed the positive relationship between alcohol and colorectal cancer varied according to ethnicity, lifestyle factors, the type of alcohol being consumed and anatomical subsite of tumors.

Conclusion

The most prevalent risk factors for cancer found among our target population stemmed from family history, age, diet and weight. Changes to one's diet, increased physical activity and proper weight management can help reduce their risk of developing cancer, as well as secondary risk factors.

References

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