



Pulse

Cancer numbers rise but risk remains stable

Although changes in age and population growth have caused a steady increase in the number of deaths caused by cancer, figures from the National Cancer Institute of Canada indicate that the individual risk has remained stable since 1971. About 80% of cancer deaths involve people who are at least 60 years old.

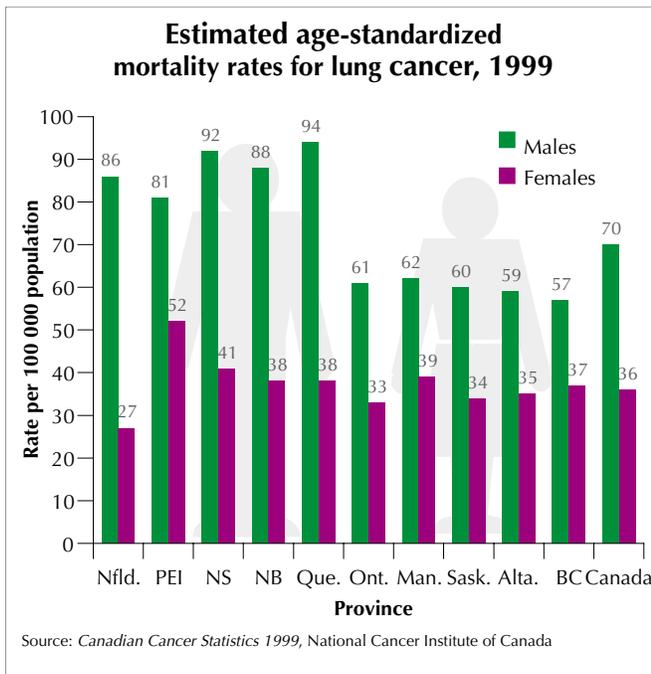
The average annual percent change in age-standardized

mortality rates from 1987 to 1994 shows decreases for many types of the disease, including cancer of the stomach, bladder, breast and prostate, as well as leukemia. Average annual increases occurred for skin and thyroid cancer. The institute notes that if lung cancer was removed from the equation, the death rate for women would have decreased by 15% since 1971.

The number of new breast cancer cases continues to rise, but earlier detection has led to an almost 10% drop in the death rate since 1986. It is estimated that 15 Canadian women will die of breast cancer every day this year.

The data in *Canadian Cancer Statistics 1999* also point to a sharp increase in the incidence of prostate cancer in the 1990s, primarily due to earlier detection. The age-standardized incidence rate increased from 100 cases per 100 000 males in 1990 to 127 per 100 000 males in 1994. Rates are now starting to show a decline; it is estimated that this year's rate will be 114 cases per 100 000 males.

Lung cancer rates continue to rise among women, and at 45 cases per 100 000 women the rate is now 5 times higher than in 1969. This is still far less than the rate for males, estimated at 81 cases per 100 000 for 1999. Lung cancer mortality rates for males are highest in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, and lowest in BC. This year, 48 Canadians will die from lung cancer every day.



This column was written by Lynda Buske, Chief, Physician Resources Information Planning, CMA. Readers may send potential research topics to Patrick Sullivan (sullip@cma.ca; 613 731-8610 or 800 663-7336, x2126; fax 613 565-2382).

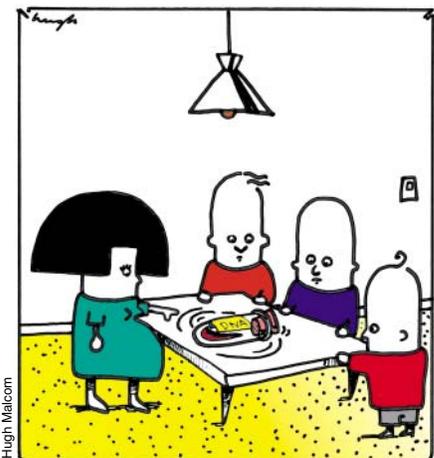
DNA testing via the Internet

You've heard of home-pregnancy tests and home blood-glucose monitoring? Now there's home-based DNA testing, thanks to a new kit available via the Internet. The manufacturer says the Easy Answers DNA-Testing Kit, which went on sale in late March, provides a simple way to resolve identity issues in the privacy of your own home — all for US\$280, plus shipping and handling.

The kit contains cotton swabs for collecting buccal cells from the inner lining of the cheek. The

swabs are then placed in a storage tube and returned to the North Texas company for testing. Company spokesman Steven Calvert says the kits are primarily designed to establish paternity in divorce cases. They are also used to determine whether twins are identical or fraternal, and to provide a source of conclusive identification if it is ever required. The company expects to be selling 100 kits a week by the end of this month.

The kit is available through a shopping mall Internet site. For in-



formation, visit www.d-fvsmall.com/DNA/dna_testing_home.htm.