

# The Medical Journal of Australia • MJA

# MEDIA RELEASE

## **CHILDHOOD CANCER RATES SHOW STEADY INCREASE**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01am Monday 17 February 2020

THE overall incidence rate of childhood cancer in Australia increased by 1.2% per year between 2005 and 2015, and is expected to rise a further 7% over the next 20 years, according to the authors of research published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

The researchers, led by Adjunct Associate Professor Danny Youlden, Senior Manager of Childhood Cancer Research at Cancer Council Queensland, analysed data from the Australian Childhood Cancer Registry for the 20 547 children under 15 years of age diagnosed between 1983 and 2015.

“The overall age-standardised incidence rate of childhood cancer increased by 34% between 1983 and 2015, increasing by 1.2% per annum between 2005 and 2015,” Youlden and colleagues found.

“During 2011–2015, the mean annual number of children diagnosed with cancer in Australia was 770, an incidence rate of 174 cases per million children per year.”

While the incidence rates of many cancers increased (hepatoblastoma [+2.3% per year], Burkitt lymphoma [+1.6%], osteosarcoma [+1.1%], intracranial and intraspinal embryonal tumours [+0.9%], and lymphoid leukaemia [+0.5%], the incidence rate of childhood melanoma fell sharply between 1996 and 2015 (-7.7% per year).

“The overall annual cancer incidence rate is conservatively projected to rise to about 186 cases per million children by 2035 (1060 cases per year),” wrote Youlden and colleagues.

“Although the reasons for these rises are largely unknown, our findings provide a foundation for health service planning for meeting the needs of children who will be diagnosed with cancer until 2035.

“This finding is consistent with reports from other countries, raising questions about the reasons for the increasing rates.

“Greater investment in research into the aetiology of childhood cancers is required, particularly to identify modifiable risk factors,” they concluded.

“Our conservative estimates of the future burden of cancer in Australian children may inform health service planning, ensuring that our youngest cancer patients continue to receive the treatment and support they need.”

**Please remember to credit *The MJA*.**

The *Medical Journal of Australia* is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

---

*The statements or opinions that are expressed in the MJA reflect the views of the authors and do not represent the official policy of the AMA or the MJA unless that is so stated.*

CONTACTS: Rhys Reynolds  
Manager, Public Relations and Social Media  
Cancer Council Queensland  
Email: [RhysReynolds@cancerqld.org.au](mailto:RhysReynolds@cancerqld.org.au)  
Ph: 0466 816 693