

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIFFERENTIALS AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN CANCER AND CIRCULATORY DISEASE DEATHS ATTRIBUTED TO NONSPECIFIC CAUSES IN SRI LANKA

Gaminiratne Wijesekere* and Prem Thapa**

Abstract: *The cause of death attributed to ill-defined categories (ICD-10 codes R00-R899) has traditionally been considered to contain little value for health policy. This is also the case for deaths where the main cause of death group is known, but the exact cause of death within the group is not known. The 1986 Global Burden of Disease Study identified several such cause of death categories, and WHO has now expanded the list. Deaths attributed to these non-specific cause categories come from ten chapters of version 10 of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10). This study examines the extent and socio-economic and regional variations in deaths attributed to nonspecific categories in Sri Lanka in 2010 using the WHO expanded list. Of the total deaths assigned to the ten causes of death groups, 26.8 per cent of deaths were attributed to nonspecific categories. A large percentage of deaths attributed to Non-Specific and Causes (NSC) were as a result of circulatory diseases (63.3 per cent) and cancer (23.5 per cent). The percentage of deaths attributed to NSC from all other cause groups was less than 6 per cent. This study assesses the socio-economic and regional variation in deaths attributed to NSCs separately for cancer and circulatory deaths, using a logistic regression approach. The study found that in both models, the sex of the deceased did not have a significant impact on deaths being attributed to NSCs. Death that occurred in a hospital had a consistently lower odds of being assigned to a non-specific cause compared to deaths that occurred in the community. Other significant effects were estimated for age and ethnicity of the deceased, the sector and socioeconomic zonal regions; but surprisingly, several of these other effects differed considerably for cancer and circulatory deaths attributed to non-specific causes.*

Keywords: Cause of death; non-specific causes; civil registration; place of death; Sri Lanka

Introduction

The causes of death statistics, derived from well-functioning civil registration systems, are the primary source of information to guide health policy in countries worldwide. The Conference of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in 1948 adopted the rule that countries should tabulate the causes of death according to the underlying cause of death. This was defined as the 'disease or injury that initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death or the circumstances of the accident or violence that produced the injury'. The ICD conference also provided rules for the selection or modification of the underlying cause of death and the form recommended

* Corresponding author, School of Demography, Australian National University, Australia.
Email: gaminiwijesekere@yahoo.com

** Institute for Integrated Development Studies, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Email: pjtahome@inet.net.au