

Professor David Forman, head of information at the National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN), said: "Although in general UK survival rates were poorer than the European average, this varied according to the type of cancer.

"Survival in the UK was better than the European average for several cancers.

"And for the few cancers where UK survival was over 5 per cent lower than the average, this report shows that the UK is generally catching up with the rest of Europe.

"It's important to remember that these statistics relate to patients diagnosed before the Cancer Plan was introduced in 2000. A study last week by NCIN partners revealed that short-term cancer survival in England and Wales has generally improved since 2000

"It's also worth noting that there is considerable variability in the way that data are collected in different countries. The NCIN is developing a framework for accurately comparing UK cancer survival data, public awareness, early detection and access to treatment on a global level, which will make these types of comparisons more meaningful."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

All 11 cancer registries within the UK are partners of the NCIN and all contributed data to EURO CARE-4, collectively providing information on the entire population of cancer patients in the country.

For cancers of the head, neck and larynx, UK rates were better than the European average. This was also the case for malignant melanoma and testicular cancer.

For most other sites of cancer, UK survival rates were within 5 per cent of the European average

For cancers of the stomach, ovary, prostate, thyroid and kidney, European survival rates were more than 5 per cent higher. For all of these five types of cancer except thyroid, the UK rates in EURO CARE-4 were, however, closer to the European average compared with results from earlier EURO CARE studies.

Rachet et al (2009) Population-based cancer survival trends in England and Wales up to 2007: an assessment of the NHS cancer plan for England. *Lancet Oncology*
DOI:10.1016/S1470-2045(09)7002