In order to compare the burden of cancer mortality worldwide, we abstracted the crude mortality rate in 2008 from the WHO mortality database. We used a crude mortality rate by cancer sites in Japan, the Philippines, the USA, Brazil, the UK, Poland and Australia. However, the most recent published mortality rate in Australia is from 2006. We selected five cancer sites with the highest mortality rates in each country and compared the difference between the sites and the distribution of cancer burden.

Figure 1 shows the burden of cancer mortality ranking highest for males and Figure 2 shows these data for females.

For males, the burden of cancer death at five major primary sites accounted for more than half of all cancer mortalities in all countries except the USA and Australia. In the seven countries, lung cancer was the most frequent cancer in varying proportions (14.8% in Brazil, to 32.3% in Poland). In all the countries except Japan and the Philippines, prostate cancer was placed second; it was third in the Philippines and fifth in Japan. Stomach cancer was the second most common cancer reported for Japan and liver cancer for the Philippines. Colon cancer was also a common form of cancer except in Brazil. It was the third most common cancer in the USA, the UK, Poland and Australia, and the fourth most frequent in Japan and the Philippines. In Japan, liver cancer was the third most frequent.

For females, the burden of cancer death at five major primary sites accounted for 60.8% of all cancer mortalities in the USA and for nearly half in other countries. Lung, breast and colon cancer were the common forms of cancer in all the countries. In most of the countries, lung cancer was placed first, except for the Philippines and Brazil where it was second. Breast cancer was also common in most countries; the most frequent in the Philippines (24.1%) and Brazil (15.5%), and the second most frequent in the USA (15.0%), the UK (16.1%), Poland (13.1%) and Australia (15.5%). In contrast, it was the fifth most frequent in Japan (8.6%). In Japan, stomach cancer was the second most frequent in females (the same as for males), and it accounted for 5.9% in Brazil. Liver cancer was reported as the third most common for the Philippines, and cancer of the cervix uteri was reported as the third most common in Brazil. Pancreas cancer was placed fourth or fifth, except for the Philippines and Brazil. The distribution of burden of cancer death showed great variety; however, in ranking of the burden of cancer mortality, the USA was similar to Australia, and the UK was similar to Poland.

Figure 1. Burden of cancer death (male).

Note: Data were downloaded from IARC CANCER Mondial Statistical Information System (http://www-dep.iarc.fr/). Responsibility for this presentation and interpretation lies with the authors of this article.

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