

Spectrum of childhood cancers in Malawi 1985-1993.

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Abstract

An analysis of seven hundred and ninety one children aged 0.2 to 14 years with confirmed malignant disease recorded by the Malawi National Cancer Registry over a period of 9 years is presented. Childhood cancer constituted 6.9% of all malignancies recorded during the study period. The top ten neoplasms in descending order of frequency were: non-Hodgkin's lymphoma 434 (54.9%), retinoblastoma 89 (11.3%), nephroblastoma 50 (6.3%), epithelial carcinoma 45 (5.7%), Hodgkin's disease 38 (4.8%), soft tissue sarcoma (excluding Kaposi): 34(4.3%), Kaposi's sarcoma 32 (4.0%), malignant tumours (not specified): 20 (2.5%), acute leukaemias 18(2.3%) and osteogenic sarcoma 16 (2.0%). Some differences noted in the pattern of neoplasms in this study from those of developed and developing African countries are discussed. The findings highlight the most common childhood malignancies in Malawi where intense research should be directed so that meaningful and cost effective therapeutic intervention programmes can be planned and developed.