

Childhood cancers in a referral hospital in Kenya: a review

Macharia, WM

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Abstract:

Following the outbreak of human immune deficiency virus (HIV) infection in the early 1980's, there has been an increase in reported cases of Kaposi's sarcoma, among other childhood malignancies, from the East and Central African region. To assess the status of childhood cancers at Kenyatta National Hospital during the AIDS epidemic period and to compare the findings with those obtained before the outbreak, relevant data were extracted from ward admission registers for all children admitted in the paediatric wards and in whom a diagnosis of a malignant disease was confirmed. The data were summarised in tables and bar charts. The hospital based prevalence for malignant diseases was 1.27% (CI = 1.23,1.31). Lymphoma (51.3%), leukaemia (21.3%), nephroblastoma (8.5%) and rhabdomyosarcoma (5.2%) are the most common childhood cancers. Compared with earlier studies, the frequency of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, Hodgkin's disease and rhabdomyosarcoma appear to have increased. Despite the AIDS epidemic, there has been no obvious increase in number of cases of Kaposi's sarcoma.