Comparison of Breast Cancer Mortality in Five Countries: France, Italy, Japan, the UK and the USA from the WHO Mortality Database (1960–2000)

Age-standardized rates (ASRs; using 1985 Japanese standard population) for Breast cancer mortality for 1960–2000 are shown for Japan, the USA, the UK, France and Italy (Fig. 1). Over this period, ASRs of breast cancer among women from the USA, the UK, France and Italy decreased following the peak around 1990. ASRs for Japanese women were much lower than those observed among women in the USA, the UK, France and Italy. However, ASRs in Japan increased constantly from 1960 to 2000 and the difference in ASRs between Japan and the other four countries has recently become smaller.

Mortality trends for breast cancer by age group are shown according to the year of death (Fig. 2). The trends in the mortality rate in the USA and the UK reached a peak around 1990 and then started to decrease gradually. Recently, decreasing trends of mortality have been clearly observed among younger age groups in the USA, the UK and Italy. In France, increasing trends of mortality are shown among younger age groups. Mortality in Japan was lower than in the other four countries from 1960 to 2000. The increasing trend in mortality was observed irrespective of age group, and the differences between age groups in Japan were small.

Mortality trends of breast cancer by age group are shown according to the year of birth in Fig. 3. In the USA and the UK there was no consistent peak of breast cancer mortality for any particular birth cohort, which means the effect corresponded to calendar year rather than birth cohort.

Figure 1. Age-standardized mortality rates for breast cancer (female) in five countries: age-standardized with 1985 Japanese standard population, rates per 100,000.
Note: Original data were downloaded from the WHO Mortality Database (version as of August 2004). The data were then tabulated by I. Yoshimi with ICD–8, ICD–9 and C50 (ICD–10). Responsibility for this presentation and interpretation lies with the authors not with the WHO Mortality Database.

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