

NEW YORK Department STATE of Health of Health

### Introduction

Although it has never been easy to meet case completeness goals, the New York State Cancer Registry (NYSCR) has always strived to attain the NPCR and, more recently, the SEER 12-month data completeness standards, the latter of which was set at 95% until shortly before this year's submission date. However, as the February 2022 Calls for Data deadline loomed, reaching 95% completeness for 12-month data of 2020 cases seemed impossible – despite intense pressure on reporting facilities by field staff, completeness was stalled at 85%. The NYSCR turned to claims records in the hope of uncovering information about the missing cancer case reports.

### Methods

- The New York State Department of Health's Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS) requires reporting of all patient encounters from licensed ambulatory surgery, emergency department (ED), hospital inpatient and outpatient facilities. Each claims record includes patient demographics and up to 17 ICD-10-CM codes for the time period of interest. We extracted 6,725,416 SPARCS claims records with any malignant neoplasm diagnosis code (ICD-10-CM C00-C96) for 2018 through June of 2021 for New York State residents.
- Using SAS 9.4, we examined the time trends of cancer-related records by month and year. We also compared the total numbers of cancer-related records by discharge year.
- Next, selecting 2019 as the pre-COVID comparison year, we analyzed the 2020 records by patient age, sex, race/ethnicity, type of encounter (i.e., inpatient, outpatient, ambulatory surgery, or emergency department), and the number of encounters per patient.
- Finally, we compared the facility-level number of cancer-related records for 10 high-volume facilities in New York City and 10 high-volume facilities in the rest of the state, selected from 378 facilities based on their claim counts.

### Results

- Overall, there were 5% more cancer-related records in 2019 than there had been in 2018 (2,009,600 vs. 1,914,346), but 8.2% fewer records in 2020 (1,844,054 total) than in 2019 (see Table 1).
- Month-by-month, the number of claims in the first two months of 2020 exceeded the numbers from 2019 by 5%, but a decrease started in March 2020, with the biggest drop in April 2020. That month had a deficit of 38.8% for cancer-related encounter reports relative to the same month the previous year. Although the numbers rose after April, the claims for the last half of 2020 were 4% lower than for 2019 (see Table 1 and Fig. 1).

# The Case of the Missing 2020 Cancers: Will Claims Data Provide a Clue?

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## **Results - Continued**



- Comparing 2020 to 2019 records by type of encounter, there were substantial decreases for all encounter types. See Table 2 and Figs. 2a and 2b.
- Table 2. Number of cancer-related records by encounter type

Number of Number of % decrease Encounter type records for records for (2020 over 2020 2019) 2019 Ambulatory 121,465 102,593 15.5% Surgery Emergency Dept. 41,215 17.4% 49,923 198,239 172,790 12.8% Inpatient 1,639,973 6.9% 1.527.456 Outpatient 1,844,054 2,009,600 8.2% Total

Fig 3. Number of cancer-related records by age



 Comparing 2020 to 2019 records by age, sex, race/ethnicity, and number of encounters per patient, there were substantial decreases across all categories of each covariate. See Figs. 3, 4, and 5 and Table 3.





### Table 3. Number of cancer-related encounters per patient

| Number of records per patient | 2019    | 2020    | % decrease<br>(2020 over 2019) |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|--------------------------------|
| 1                             | 154,239 | 146,257 | 5.2%                           |
| 2                             | 72,273  | 66,822  | 7.5%                           |
| 3                             | 40,364  | 37,566  | 6.9%                           |
| 4                             | 26,276  | 23,821  | 9.3%                           |
| 5 - 6                         | 30,563  | 27,888  | 8.8%                           |
| 7 - 9                         | 22,946  | 21,369  | 6.9%                           |
| 10 - 19                       | 29,424  | 27,292  | 7.2%                           |
| >= 20                         | 22,396  | 20,231  | 9.7%                           |
| Total                         | 398,481 | 371,246 | 6.8%                           |

• In analyses of 20 (of 378) high-volume 56% of claims records, 10 facilities in and more prolonged drop in reporting in 2020 than 10 facilities in the rest of the state overall (See Fig. 6a) and by type of encounter (See Figs. 6b, 6c, 6d, and 6e)

Fig 4. Number of cancer-related records by sex

reporting facilities, which accounted for New York City had a more pronounced















**Acknowledgements:** This work was supported in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Program of Cancer Registries through cooperative agreement 6NU58DP006309 awarded to the New York State Department of Health and by Contract 75N91018D00005 (Task Order 75N91018F00001) from the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health. Many thanks to Ms. Amy R. Kahn for kindly providing guidance and comments throughout the whole study process.



## **Results - Continued**

### Limitations

This analysis excludes encounters from laboratories, other states, and some physicians' offices and radiation treatment centers. It therefore provides an incomplete estimate of total 2020 cancer-related health encounters among New York State residents.

 Because these claims were not de-duplicated by person or by diagnosis, direct comparison to incidence counts is not possible.

### Conclusions

 Although SPARCS data do not provide definitive evidence of incident cancer diagnoses, circumstantial evidence indicates that there were fewer cancer cases diagnosed among New York State residents in 2020. New York City experienced a larger and more sustained deficit in cancer-related encounters than the rest of the state. Additional analyses are needed to assess the impacts on stage at diagnosis and outcomes associated with delays in cancer diagnosis and treatment because of COVID-19.