The Role of the Central Registry Analyst

There are two main types of cancer registries: hospital-based and population-based. Hospital-based registries collect cancer information only on patients that are diagnosed, treated, or followed by that facility. Population-based registries collect cancer information on all newly diagnosed or treated cancers in a defined geographic region, such as a state or province. Federal, state, and/or provincial health laws require this information to be reported to the applicable central cancer registry to support core public health functions, specifically identify needs, inform and evaluate cancer control and prevention programs, and support cancer research. The resources available here are tailored to population-based registry analysts.

In the field of cancer registration, tumor registrars are responsible for abstracting the case in accordance with standards set by national organizations, which registries follow. Once the case has been submitted to the registry, it undergoes several rounds of deduplication, consolidation, and quality control edits. The final case is added to a database, which is used to provide research data and cancer surveillance statistics. Many cancer registry resources are focused on this ongoing, systematic collection of cancer registry data. However, the goal of data collection is to reduce the burden of cancer, and, therefore, the data must be analyzed and interpreted to inform clinical and public health interventions. This is the main role of the registry analyst.

To ensure appropriate interpretation of results, the work of the analyst should not be done in isolation. It cannot be stressed enough--a certified Oncology Data Specialist (ODS) (formerly known as a Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR)) is a great resource for any data analyst. ODSs provide a wealth of knowledge about the intricacies of coding cancer data and can provide guidance on variable selection and can elucidate subtle differences in similar data items. Conversely, analysts can assist ODSs by providing feedback about quality and completeness issues with the data. It is vital that analysts and registrars have a strong working relationship. Registries function optimally when analysis and data collection are collaborative.