3.2 LINKAGE OF DATA IN THE STUDY OF ETHNIC INEQUALITIES AND INEQUITIES IN HEALTH OUTCOMES IN SCOTLAND, NEW ZEALAND AND THE NETHERLANDS: INSIGHTS FOR GLOBAL STUDY OF ETHNICITY AND HEALTH

Chair: Dr. Hester Ward, UK

3G Mueller,* 1N Bansal,*1 R Bhopal, 1C Fischbacher, 1C Povey, 1J Chalmers, 2O Brewster, 3R Bhopal, 1D Brewster, 1G Mueller, 1M Steiner, 1H Brown, 1University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK; 2Information Services Division, Edinburgh, UK; 3General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh, UK

Introduction

Ethnic variation in health outcomes and in utilisation of health services has been observed worldwide. Quantifying and understanding this variation is essential to identify the health needs of ethnically diverse populations and assess the extent to which healthcare is equitable. Incomplete ethnic coding in routine data collection in Scotland undermines these efforts.

Methods

We examined ethnic variations in cardiovascular, cancer, maternal and child, and mental health using data linkage methods to bring together data on self-defined ethnicity and health outcomes. Personal identifiers available in both data sets were used to link the encrypted unique record identifiers (census number and Community Health Index number) using exact and probability matching to create a look-up file containing only corresponding encrypted record identifiers. These methods ensured that no personal information was shared between participating organisations. The resulting anonymised database included information on around 4.6 million people with 7 years’ follow-up data.

Results

Important ethnic differences in all health areas were observed. The White Scottish population had higher cardiovascular risks than Other White British, but Pakistani populations had the highest risks and Chinese the lowest. Breast cancer screening non-attendance was substantially lower in Pakistani women than White Scottish. White Scottish populations had higher hospital admission attendances for the USA suggests that these differences may (partly) be explained from 1981. More recently, the Cancer trends study has linked cancer registrations. The proportion of eligible mortality / cancer records linked to a census record is now over 80%. Weighting is used to adjust for any linkage bias.

Results

Previously calculated mortality rates for Māori and Pacific people were shown to be underestimated by a quarter due to numerator-denominator bias. Corrected trends in mortality rates since 1981 demonstrate little if any improvement in Māori mortality rates during the 1980s–90s, concurrent with major reforms that impacted more on Māori than non-Māori (eg, unemployment rates among Māori reached 25% in 1992, compared with 7% among Europeans).

Other analyses demonstrate that CVD is the major cause of death giving rise to ethnic inequalities in mortality, but as CVD rates fall for all ethnic groups inequalities in mortality are “relocating” to cancer. Inequalities in cancer incidence are less prominent than inequalities in cancer mortality, but nevertheless there are curious findings, such as: higher (and faster rising) breast cancer incidence among Māori, despite a more favourable risk factor profile; and particularly high endometrial and thyroid cancer incidence among Pacific women. There has also been a tremendous reduction in cervical cancer inequalities.

Conclusion

This linkage has allowed accurate research on trends that was hitherto impossible.

3.2.2 LINKAGE OF CENSUS WITH MORTALITY AND CANCER DATA IN NEW ZEALAND. [PART OF SYMPOSIUM REF NUMBER 2353, “LINKAGE OF DATA IN THE STUDY OF ETHNIC INEQUALITIES …”]

I Vaartjes,* 1L van Oeffelen, 1M L Bots, 2K Stronks, 1C Agyemang, 1Julius Center for Health Sciences and Primary Care, University Medical Center, Utrecht, The Netherlands; 2Department of Public Health, Academic Medical Centre, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Introduction

Ethnicity is difficult to collect in a standard way between health and census datasets, meaning routinely calculated rates are prone to numerator-denominator bias.

Methods

Census and mortality data have been routinely linked in the New Zealand Census-Mortality Study, creating time series data from 1981. More recently, the Cancer trends study has linked cancer registrations. The proportion of eligible mortality / cancer records linked to a census record is now over 80%. Weighting is used to adjust for any linkage bias.

Results

Previously calculated mortality rates for Māori and Pacific people were shown to be underestimated by a quarter due to numerator-denominator bias. Corrected trends in mortality rates since 1981 demonstrate little if any improvement in Māori mortality rates during the 1980s–90s, concurrent with major reforms that impacted more on Māori than non-Māori (eg, unemployment rates among Māori reached 25% in 1992, compared with 7% among Europeans).

Other analyses demonstrate that CVD is the major cause of death giving rise to ethnic inequalities in mortality, but as CVD rates fall for all ethnic groups inequalities in mortality are “relocating” to cancer. Inequalities in cancer incidence are less prominent than inequalities in cancer mortality, but nevertheless there are curious findings, such as: higher (and faster rising) breast cancer incidence among Māori, despite a more favourable risk factor profile; and particularly high endometrial and thyroid cancer incidence among Pacific women. There has also been a tremendous reduction in cervical cancer inequalities.

Conclusion

This linkage has allowed accurate research on trends that was hitherto impossible.

3.2.3 LINKAGE OF DATA IN THE STUDY OF ETHNIC INEQUALITIES AND INEQUITIES IN HEALTH OUTCOMES IN THE NETHERLANDS: INSIGHTS IN THE RISK OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE AND IN THE USE OF HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

1I Vaartjes,* 1L van Oeffelen, 1M L Bots, 2K Stronks, 1C Agyemang, 1Julius Center for Health Sciences and Primary Care, University Medical Center, Utrecht, The Netherlands; 2Department of Public Health, Academic Medical Centre, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Background

Ethnic variation in health outcomes and in utilisation of health services has been observed worldwide. Quantifying and understanding this variation is essential to identify the health needs of ethnically diverse population. As many ethnic minority populations in the Netherlands, and elsewhere, are ageing the burden of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) is increasingly becoming important. Therefore, one major health task is the routine collection and production of ethnically disaggregated, national-level data on incidence of morbidity and mortality from CVD.

Methods

Linkage methods were used to determine nationwide differences in short-term and long-term risk of death in patients hospitalised for the first time for various CVD by country of birth.

Results

Lower survival after a first CVD event in ethnic minority groups than in native Dutch was observed after linkage of nationwide registers (Population Register (PR)* Hospital Discharge Register (HDR)* Cause of Death Register (CDR)). Evidence from the USA suggests that these differences may (partly) be explained by differences in specialised care between ethnic minority groups and their White counterparts. Our ongoing is currently using linkage methods to assess role of healthcare use on CVD outcomes in ethnic minority CVD patients and native Dutch CVD patients. In addition, specific (healthcare) factors that may contribute to the ethnic inequalities in the risk of (non-) fatal CVD events will be determined.

Conclusion

Linkage methods provide huge opportunities for understanding ethnic inequalities in CVD.