



#### ***Issues in the analysis of the multiple causes of death data***

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Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publishes mortality data annually for Australia based on coding of the causes of death listed on death certificates. Prior to 1997, these mortality data only included a single cause of death (the underlying cause of death) for each death. Since the introduction of ICD-10 (the tenth edition of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems) in 1997, the ABS has been coding all causes of death listed on the death certificate and applying a series of rules to determine the underlying cause of death. These unit records (all causes of death for each death) are the multiple causes of death data, which, under special conditions, are available for analysis by researchers outside the ABS. In this paper, we examine some of the issues in the analysis of these data and illustrate these issues with an analysis of causes of death associated with cancer. Cancer was the underlying cause of death for 37,622 of the deaths registered in 2002, 28% of all deaths registered in that year. Cancer was also listed on the death certificate (but was not the underlying cause) for an additional 4,826 deaths or 4% of the deaths registered in 2002.