

# Brain Tumour Facts 2011

Freecall: 1800 857 221

Brain Tumour Alliance Australia Incorporated (BTAA) provides information resources to newly diagnosed patients and their families. More information on brain tumours is available from [www.btaa.org.au](http://www.btaa.org.au)



## Diverse

- Three main categories of brain tumours (central nervous system tumours): primary, 'benign' and brain metastases (or secondary brain tumours, arising from a primary cancer elsewhere in the body).
  - There are over 120 different types of brain tumours alone, of which some 40 are classified as malignant.<sup>1</sup>
  - The location of the tumour (area of brain, spine or meninges), grade, and the type of treatments undertaken and a range of other factors influence the impact on the patient, their abilities and prognosis.
  - They are the only cancer to directly affect both the mind and the body.

## Cause unknown

- Causes are unknown, not preventable by any known lifestyle changes.
- Early detection not possible at this time.
- Symptoms may include some of the following: headaches (that wake you up in the morning), seizures in a person who does not have a history of seizures, cognitive or personality changes, eye weakness, nausea or vomiting, speech disturbances, or memory loss.

## Treatment and support

- Cause complex health issues and may require intervention from numerous specialities.
  - Better treatment leads to longer life expectancy and better neurological outcomes.
  - Critical shortages in health professionals best able to manage health of brain tumour patients.
  - Brain tumours (and treatment side effects) can impair decision making and judgement and compound the challenge of treatment.
  - Low level of understanding in the community about brain tumours and the enormous impact they have on individuals and their families.
  - Although around 70% of children will survive, they are often left with long-term side effects.

## Summary statistics

- Around 1,400 new cases of primary (malignant) brain tumours in Australia each year, including 100 in children.
  - This number excludes an estimated 2,000 so-called benign brain tumours that may cause disability or (rarely) death.<sup>2</sup>
  - Second highest cause of death for children aged 0 – 14 years from all causes – second only to accidental drowning/immersion<sup>3</sup> and highest cause of death in this age group from cancer – an average of 33 deaths per year (2003-2007).<sup>4</sup>
  - Highest cause of death from cancer in people aged 0–39 (average of 120 deaths per year in 2003-2007).<sup>5</sup>
- No significant change in five-year relative survival between 1982–1986 and 1998–2004 (19%).<sup>6</sup>
- Largest lifetime financial costs faced by households of any cancer type, at \$149,000 per person, and highest lifetime economic cost of any cancer type, at 1.89 million dollars per person.<sup>7</sup>
- More than 5,000 hospitalisations, 12.5 days average length of stay in hospital (2008-09).<sup>8</sup>
- Brain tumour research funding is low in relation to the burden of the disease – along with lung cancer and mesothelioma, bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, lymphoma and cancers of unknown primary site.<sup>9</sup>

1 [World Health Organization](#) (Furnari et al. 2007). The most common primary intrinsic brain tumors are the gliomas for adults and medulloblastomas for children.

2 Based on ratio for primary brain tumours in the USA according to CBTRUS [www.cbtrus.org/factsheet/factsheet.html](http://www.cbtrus.org/factsheet/factsheet.html)

3 AIHW, unpublished data

4 Leukemia and myeloproliferative and myelodysplastic diseases – average of 27 deaths per year for the period 2003-2007, unpublished data (AIHW).

5 AIHW, unpublished data

6 [Cancer research in Australia: An overview of cancer research projects and research programs in Australia, 2003 to 2005](#), Cancer Australia, pg2.

7 [Cost of Cancer in NSW, 2005](#), Cancer Council NSW, prepared by Access Economics, 2006.

7. [AIHW Cancer in Australia 2010: An overview](#); pg177 hospitalisations, pg 80 length of stay.

8 [Cancer research in Australia: An overview of cancer research projects and research programs in Australia, 2003 to 2005](#), Cancer Australia, pg2