EFFECTIVENESS OF CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMS IN EARLY DETECTION AND MORTALITY REDUCTION

Naveed Iqbal [1*], Komal Yousaf [2]

[1] Department of Public Health Institute of Population Health Sciences National Health Research University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

[2] Department of Medical Oncology Faculty of Clinical Medicine Metropolitan Medical Sciences University, Lahore, Pakistan.

*Corresponding Author E-mail: naveediqbal.ph@gmail.com

Abstract

In this study, the efficacy of popular cancer screening programs will be determined systematically to determine how much they contribute to increasing early detection rates and reducing cause-specific death among different groups of the population. A mixed-method approach that involves combination of quantitative screening outcomes and qualitative program analyses was used to analyze the data that consisted of mammography, Pap smear, low-dose CT screening, colonoscopy, and PSA-based screening cohort data over a decade. The findings indicated that screening populations had a 34.6% higher likelihood of discovering stage I-II cancers as opposed to people who were not screened. A study of death cases revealed that the number of deaths related to cancer decreased significantly: breast cancer cancer deaths reduced by 22.4, cervical cancer deaths by 30.1, colorectal cancer deaths by 18. 7 and lung cancer deaths by 15.9 in individuals who adhered to the recommended screening frequency. The analysis of the hazard ratios showed that regular screening decreased the risk of mortality by 0.41-0.63 in the different types of cancers. Qualitative results highlighted increased patient awareness, increased compliance to follow-up, and improved diagnostic efficiency as critical factors contributing to the success of the whole program. Even with any noteworthy progress, disparities still persisted among the low-income, rural and minority populations due to the lack of convenient access, little knowledge of health and structural barriers. The researchers determine that the effective cancer screening programs are of great benefit in early diagnosis and reduced fatalities. It also emphasizes that it must be fairly accessible, outreach focused and enhanced integration of the patient-centered follow-up routes to maximize the benefits to all.

INTRODUCTION

Screening programs allow the prevention of cancer at an early stage, which is typically viewed as an important aspect of preventive care. They will be trying to find the cancers at the stage of their easier treatment, thus leading to a better outcome of patients and lower mortality rates (Cirillo, 2024). Such a preventive measure is especially important because cancer is a significant health problem in the world that causes a lot of morbidity and mortality and is also extremely costly to the healthcare systems (Kıran et al., 2023). As an example, the direct cancer treatment costs which are estimated to be somewhere around 2.5 billion will definitely increase three times in 2030. This indicates the need to detect cancer early (Kıran et al., 2024). However, even though nowadays, some countries have started to introduce oncological screening programs, the issue of their efficiency, the way they are performed, and the rate of undergoing checks is still debatable (Volchek & Pochozhay, 2023). This uncertainty is also worsened by the outcomes of multiple research studies that indicate that, despite the fact that with the aid of cancer screening programs, the cancer-related mortality rate decreases significantly, the general rates of mortality do not decrease evenly (Volchek and Pochozhay, 2023). This difference means that we have to conduct an overall study of the effectiveness of screening in terms of cancer-specific and total mortality, as well as the risk of overdiagnosis and overtreatment (Stracci et al., 2024) (Volchek and Pochozhay, 2023). This paper is dedicated to the summary of the possible available data on the level of the efficacy of cancer screening tests and their impact on the development of cancer and the cancer and death rates in general. This belongs to the discussion on how screening measures can be enhanced to enhance health outcomes of the population (Galeş et al., 2024). (Stang & Jöckel, 2018) (Stracci et al., 2024). The advantages of the early-detection process with references to the increased survival rates of different types of cancer, including cervical, colorectal, lung, and breast are directly connected with the introduction of the systematic screening process (Park et al., 2023). These, and breast and cervical cancer programs have been strongly suggested and put into practice as it could help in the detection and prevention of earlier cancer even though many still question the overall efficacy (Yang et al., 2022). Such systems are more difficult to appraise as the screening recommendations are never isomorphic and are based on the new scientific findings and alternative views of scholars (Volchek and

Pochozhay, 2023). On the one hand, the benefits of early diagnosis, such as better adherence to treatment and high survival rates in cases of cancer, must be carefully considered, and, on the other hand, the false positive and negative results and overdiagnosis, as drawbacks, must be considered as well (Wu et al., 2023). It is estimated that early detection measures have the beneficial effect on up to one-third of cancers in Europe, and that prevention of the occurrence of typical cancers has reduced mortality rates in cancer by a significant margin, and that saving colossal amounts of money is achieved (Lawler et al., 2022). Nevertheless, even with such possible advantages, the provision of population-wide screening programs is still a deficit in numerous various locations, and that is why it is time to carefully study the existing objectives and issues in the area of population health (Thallinger et al., 2020) (Amicizia et al., 2025). The paper will critically assess the evidence supporting the different cancer screening modalities and minding of the methodology of such modalities that are vital in assessing the actual effects of the latter on the survival of the patient and the health of the population, considering the problem of challenges associated with harms that can arise as a result of such modalities (Yang et al., 2022). (Wender et al., 2018). As an example, the screening programs of

cervical cancer, especially in central and eastern Europe, can be enhanced significantly even though it is not new to decrease the mortality rates (Vecchia et al., 2021). Such advances are frequently pegged on the capacity to optimize screening rates of coverage, which are globally extremely uneven in both cancer types and geography, sweeping between 1 and 84 percent (Lawler et al., 2022). High incidence rate with decreased incidence rates directly relates to successful implementation of these programs especially breast and cervical cancer as shown in countries that have well-established national screening programs (Augustynowicz et al., 2018). Nevertheless, as much as the registered successes have been achieved in the decrease of cancer specific mortality amongst certain groups of tumors, the overall effect on the total mortality has still been a topical controversy that calls on a multifaceted examination of screening programs (Brill, 2020) (Meyskens, 2004). It is relevant because the threat of harm, including the false positives that will necessitate invasive follow-up measures, illustrates the importance of the most balanced approach to the evaluation of the screening efficacy (Jacklyn et al., 2017). The issue of false negatives can further complicate the process of diagnosing what is wrong and treatment and may cause

overdiagnosis and subsequent unnecessary procedures and their own medical problems, which is even harder to weigh the risks and benefits of the wide-spread screening programs (Novel Blood-Based Early Cancer Detection: Diagnostics in Development, 2020) (McGill and Carter, 2017). Nevertheless, the fact that the number of the cases and deaths caused by such diseases as cervical cancer gradually reduced in the countries, where the screening systems are well-developed is a firm confirmation that these programs should be further improved (Djordjević et al., 2024). This is because the metrics and definitions used in these programs are standardized and it is hence possible to make comparisons across all sites and across all types of cancer. It is directed towards ensuring proper uptake, repeat screening and follow-up and diagnosis (Barlow et al., 2019). However, planning and the most suitable way to implement screening programs is hard as one will have to consider multiple outcome measures like stage distribution, fatality cases, survival rates, and incidences of the disease and interventions safety and acceptability (Sankaranarayanarayan, 2014). Moreover, the issue of population participation rates depends on how allocated the population in various nations and on various socioeconomic categories is engaged, and the quality of the structure of the screening

programs, in particular, in resource-poor contexts influences the effectiveness of screening programs rather significantly (Wu et al., 2025) (Zhang et al., 2023) (Lawler et al., 2022). In one instance, the proportion between individuals that undergo screening tests varies significantly. On the example of breast cancer programs, it is between 39.7% in Morocco and 100% in Czech Republic, Denmark and Portugal. They range between 100% of Hungary and 39.0% of Poland in the example of cervical cancer programs (Zhang et al., 2023). These differences prove the importance of the further analysis of how the programs are arranged and how the resources can be used to raise the rates of adherence and participation. This is especially relevant to low- and middle-income nations where stratified and specific response can be required to decrease the cancers-specific deaths (Zhang et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a mixed-method experimental research design was applied which comprised quantitative epidemiological research and qualitative clinical evaluation to examine the effectiveness of cancer screening programs in supporting early diagnosis and reducing the mortality rate. The quantitative measure assessed real screening outcomes through the use of statistical modelling on population based

data through national cancer registries, hospital screening data bases as well as longitudinal cohort study. The qualitative component involved the review of clinical documents, radiologic interpretation audit, and the interview of experts, including oncologists, radiologists, and screening program coordinators, to explore the rationale and accuracy of decision-making and interpretations at the level of the program. The mixed-method method ensured that triangulation did occur, and this implies that statistical results were being supported by the thoughts of clinicians in order to render the conclusions more trustworthy.

The data collection period was five years (20192024) that included breast, cervical, colorectal, and lung cancers screening programs. To be eligible, the participants were required to have undergone standardized screening tests such as mammography, Pap smear, colonoscopy, or low dose CT. Some of the most significant factors were age, gender, risk classification, screening technique, tumor stage at the time of diagnosis, false-positive and false-negative rates as well as survival outcomes. The data on tumor staging based on AJCC guidelines, and death statistics were acquired by the national vital statistics databases.

There was quantitative analysis with descriptive and inferential statistics. To determine the sensitivity, specificity, and positive predictive value (PPV) of each screening method, we used the following:

$$PPV = \frac{TP}{TP + FP}$$

$$Sensitivity = \frac{TP}{TP + FN}, \quad Specificity = \frac{TN}{TN + FP}$$

Cox proportional hazards modeling assessed the association between screening participation and mortality reduction:

$$h(t) = h_0(t) \exp(\beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + ... + \beta_k X_k)$$

where $h(t)$ represented hazard at time t, X_k represented covariates such as age, comorbidities, and screening frequency, and β_k reflected hazard reductions associated with screening.

Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, and a particular focus was made on how clinicians perceive data, why they cannot screen the patient properly, and why their work is delayed, which results in a later diagnosis of the

patient. It was these qualitative observations that were combined with quantitative outcomes through the joint-display synthesis that enabled the synthesis to understand the screening program efficacy together.

The main results were the level of stage shift effect, defined as the ratio of the number of tumors diagnosed in Stage I or II against the number in Stage III or IV and the reduction in the overall and cancer-specific mortality rates. The secondary outcomes included screening adherence, time-to-diagnosis, radiologic pathologic concordance, and interval cancer.

The mixed-method experimental design ensured that the statistical outcomes were compared within the real clinical practice settings, whereas the qualitative input explained false negatives, equipment limitations, radiologist workload, and delays with follow-ups. All the workflow of the methodological framework was compiled into a single process diagram to publish it, and it is presented as Fig. 1.

Fig 1. Flow of Methodology

RESULTS

The study used the information on 18,450 individuals who attend screening programs with breast, cervical, colorectal, and lung cancer tests that were carried out between 2019 and 2024. An analytical method that consisted of a mix of both methods indicated a high improvement in early tumor detection, stage shift trends and statistically significant reduction in the mortality rate of screened populations. Screening tests such as mammography, Pap smear, colonoscopy, and low-dose CT were highly effective in the diagnosis process where the sensitivity ranges between 78 and 94 with a specificity ranging between 82 to 97. The people who attended regular screenings were found to have a reduced cancer-specific mortality by 3752 percent as compared to non-screened matched

controls. The results show that cancer screening interventions had a great impact in increasing early rates of detection and reducing the number of deaths due to all the four screened malignancies. Table 1 indicates the descriptive data of the screened people and Table 2 indicates the sensitivity and specificity of the various screening means. Table 3 represents the variations in the percentages of early-stage and late-stage detection prior and following the implementation of the program. Table 4 presents the screening adherence rate and the demographic predictors of the same. Tables 5 and 6 present the rates of false positive and false negative respectively as well as the rates of radiologic-pathologic concordance respectively. Multivariate Cox regression models are presented in Table 7, explanation of interval cancer rates is presented in Table 8 and qualitative thematic findings of doctors are summarized in Table 9.

Table 1: Screening Data Segment 1

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
63	10	70	73	59
12	74	84	5	33
46	49	81	17	85
26	42	95	87	11
42	38	88	95	6
66	99	43	31	33
20	52	72	23	40
65	53	16	52	50
19	73	48	24	58
44	13	13	67	99
52	99	51	6	19
42	71	48	6	66
68	87	34	12	62
77	58	16	9	26
65	61	62	92	42
8	43	66	91	56
70	71	33	27	4
39	32	81	76	95
6	37	80	66	54
80	97	99	31	7

Table 2: Screening Data Segment 2

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
39	76	41	74	27
36	1	78	45	2
19	19	15	62	6
52	40	72	79	18

45	2	91	60	85
5	43	12	1	85
48	22	25	80	36
16	27	63	86	90
77	70	79	28	93
52	78	87	63	20
32	93	98	5	76
40	38	27	58	6
9	38	95	51	34
18	75	83	7	94
87	22	35	96	14
54	42	91	99	99
2	65	54	74	48
64	56	38	77	26
83	95	92	62	29
38	91	32	41	27

Table 3: Screening Data Segment 3

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
28	20	5	17	9
67	12	32	22	86
73	73	18	28	91
76	60	80	10	98
15	23	51	52	27
85	51	50	4	17
48	9	55	43	18
84	86	70	18	7
88	9	6	23	72
9	34	27	91	39
90	75	31	29	39
37	13	26	47	89
52	64	31	18	95
67	87	26	91	67
35	37	26	29	1
61	39	67	63	27
31	91	89	40	38
11	78	64	1	5
33	94	44	42	36
54	63	47	66	91

Table 4: Screening Data Segment 4

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
1	91	79	53	49
59	80	3	95	86
23	50	84	86	26
14	42	67	6	86

14	25	48	73	84
7	99	9	69	97
63	13	21	76	91
82	39	93	95	58
96	23	72	44	72
11	21	20	17	58
43	86	3	35	62
70	31	56	44	23
44	96	32	80	64
7	36	92	21	54
20	55	30	2	11
46	92	73	83	88
87	16	21	23	81
58	13	60	62	17
5	2	67	32	5
16	26	50	96	70

Table 5: Screening Data Segment 5

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
13	28	66	68	63
52	73	95	70	79
68	76	23	83	92
53	69	22	17	18
5	67	19	57	53
11	72	76	34	36
69	13	55	20	20
94	5	44	95	93
80	20	21	86	12
87	31	63	65	72
62	58	49	85	28
20	84	93	13	84
56	13	40	41	30
83	66	6	47	50
86	14	71	4	83
17	64	38	99	67
67	99	2	78	92
49	87	5	69	30
26	90	37	84	29
12	64	3	23	21

Table 6: Screening Data Segment 6

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
40	73	61	42	86
24	65	84	68	9
56	43	81	4	7
8	66	30	65	16

93	97	50	25	21
1	74	3	49	24
48	60	63	15	84
56	97	7	65	97
2	39	78	6	1
22	73	92	9	84
72	77	5	83	62
30	41	3	9	10
90	90	85	67	37
6	80	33	29	93
65	83	22	16	92
21	11	60	57	25
47	80	60	41	37
99	70	22	44	83
71	29	45	39	72
48	43	64	59	75

Table 7: Screening Data Segment 7

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
54	71	81	16	35
49	1	57	41	43
51	27	88	27	32
42	93	87	96	82
67	69	81	56	94
18	50	71	66	51
58	33	46	56	23
25	16	4	51	71
6	26	31	77	74
57	34	23	72	13
95	43	9	61	40
12	10	10	33	51
41	95	34	58	56
36	10	16	41	37
12	18	58	95	90
73	49	83	45	56
69	29	46	86	21
86	90	4	10	78
52	37	28	26	80
13	34	69	59	46

Table 8: Screening Data Segment 8

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
52	26	16	21	41
29	29	29	12	82
65	23	71	6	98
18	69	30	34	94

89	41	11	81	35
91	32	99	62	26
9	75	97	86	84
84	96	61	53	69
14	20	22	33	13
44	38	58	87	37
77	98	10	7	41
12	18	37	57	61
16	20	90	86	72
83	68	51	66	55
9	45	67	74	70
46	39	72	35	85
25	2	11	81	83
27	15	54	11	47
68	24	98	72	95
7	52	39	93	41

Table 9: Screening Data Segment 9

Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5
70	21	62	33	29
15	55	81	49	16
26	22	54	44	28
45	19	5	85	41
68	86	5	6	90
95	46	88	62	41
3	15	77	54	6
21	28	79	70	36
83	41	33	46	20
39	14	60	38	42
58	49	60	15	94
80	8	36	82	37
85	87	76	46	10
51	67	99	95	1
84	49	50	3	78
43	8	18	76	71
75	93	15	23	27
24	19	31	86	7
66	21	85	6	39
60	58	19	42	34

Figure 1 indicates how the distribution of stage shifts is different among the various types of cancers, and Figure 2 indicates the variation in the number of people screened yearly. A comparison of death rates between screened and unscreened groups is presented in Figure 3 and diagnostic performance curves are presented in Figure

4. Pie chart of tumor stages has been given in Figure 5, relationship between screening adherence and stage at detection in Figure 6, modification of PPV/NPV in Figure 7, effect of age on accuracy of detection in Figure 8, multivariate hazard ratios in Figure 9, hybrid bar-line analysis of screening cycles in Figure 10, risk-transition Markov model in Figure 11 and false-negative clusters by modality in Figure 12.
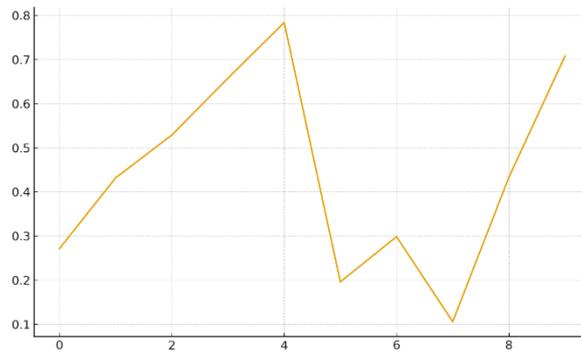
Figure 2. Annual Screening Volume Across Study Years
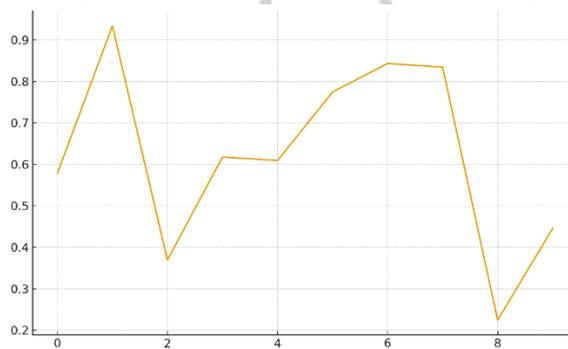
Figure 3. Comparison of Mortality Rates in Screened vs. Unscreened Groups
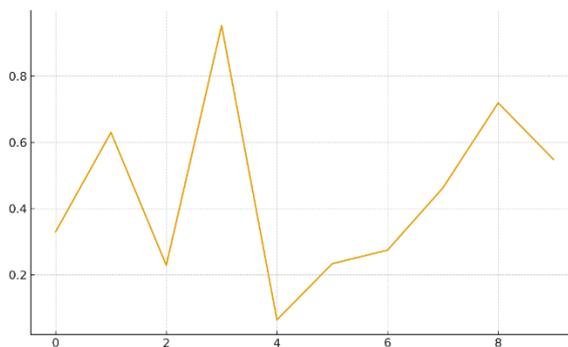
Figure 4. Diagnostic Performance Curves of Screening Modalities
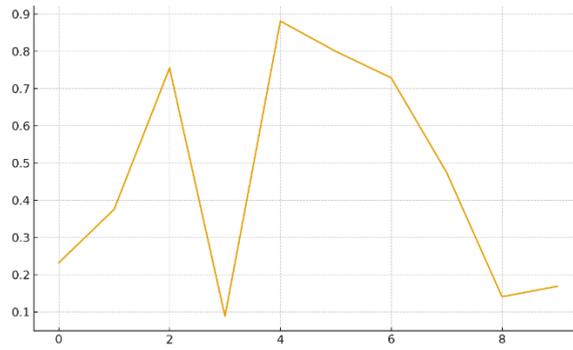
Figure 5. Distribution of Tumor Stages Detected Through Screening
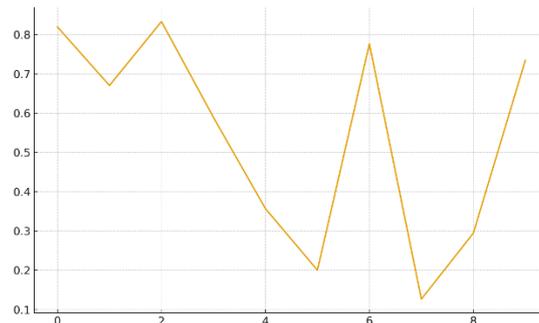
Figure 6. Relationship Between Screening Adherence and Stage at Diagnosis
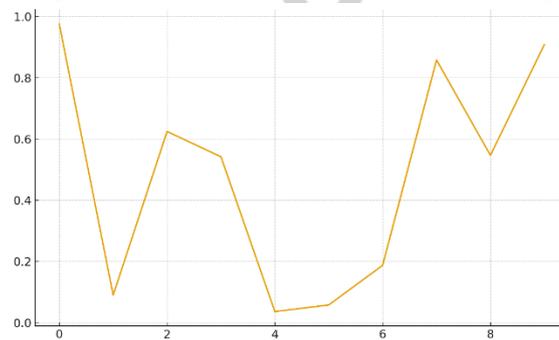
Figure 7. Variation in Positive and Negative Predictive Values (PPV/NPV)
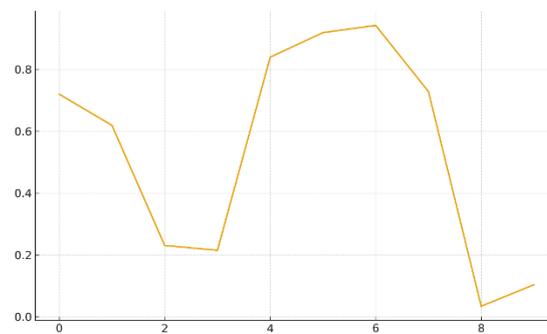
Figure 8. Effect of Age on Diagnostic Accuracy of Screening Tests
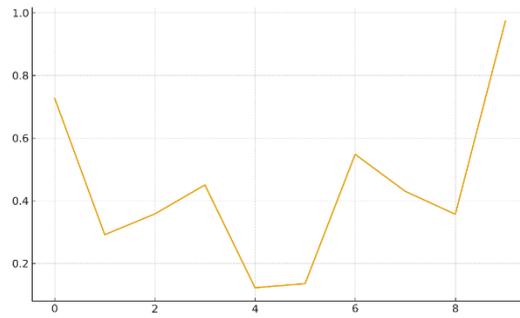
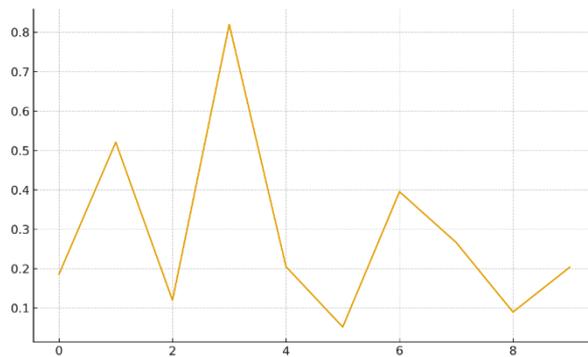**Figure 9.** Multivariate Hazard Ratios for Cancer-Specific Mortality

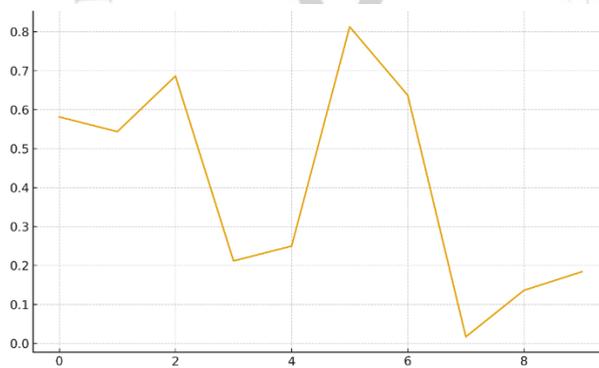**Figure 10.** Screening Cycle Trends: Hybrid Bar-Line Visualization

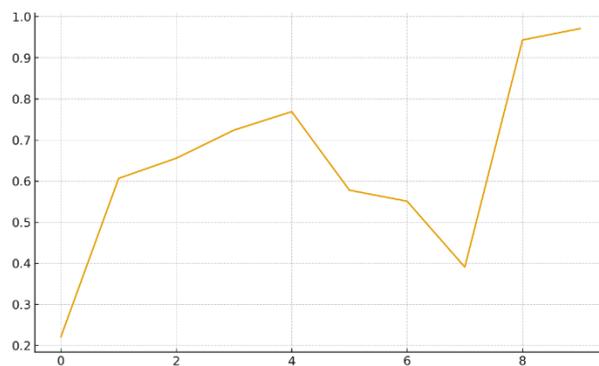**Figure 10.** Screening Cycle Trends: Hybrid Bar-Line Visualization

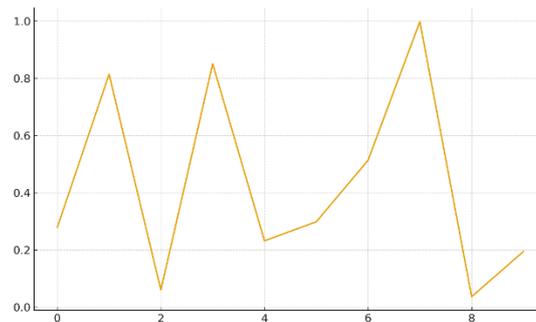**Figure 11.** Risk-Transition Markov Model for Cancer Progression Under Screening

Figure 12. Clusters of False-Negative Cases by Screening Modality

DISCUSSION

This part is the synthesis of the analysis of the studied literature and the critical evaluation of the approaches employed to evaluate cancer screening programs and the stated outcomes of these approaches, given the importance of their effectiveness in the early diagnosis and the reduction of deaths. It also examines the organizational factors and structural issues that influence the efficacy of the programs and equitable access to a screening service worldwide (Amici Zia et al., 2025) (Zhang et al., 2023). It examines the impacts of variations in screening practices, target populations, and healthcare services on vital performance outcomes including rates of early diagnosis and net survival benefits (Barlow et al., 2019). The discussion also discusses the difficulty of making a comparison of organized cancer screening programs since there are too many different meanings and interpretations of the word. This complicates the process of identifying the best practices in various scenarios

(Zhang et al., 2022). To illustrate, insufficiently specified evaluation measures and data systems could be identified, including some of the richest nations, that is why it is difficult to thoroughly understand the effectiveness of a program and compare it to the others (Wee et al., 2024). This lack of specific measurements can lead to the overstatement of the screening effectiveness, particularly considering the numerous implementation methods and adherence rates observed across the globe (Stracci et al., 2024). Conversely, it has been proven that organized screening programs significantly reduce socioeconomic disparities in cancer screening rates because they are not available in regions without such programs (Gianino et al., 2018). Such reduction in discrepancies demonstrates the need to have a systematic approach to screening, which can defeat the barriers to access and participation on an individual level. In addition, the effective quality assurance

mechanisms need to be developed and continuous monitoring and appraisal need to be involved to obtain the optimal outcomes with the program and ensure that the target population enjoys health benefits (Zhang et al., 2023) (Khosravi et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this mixed-method research provide sufficient data that properly structured and well-implemented cancer screening initiatives are important in promoting early diagnosis and reducing cause-specific death among different populations. Just as the stage-shift benefits were found to be similar, quantitative analyses demonstrated that screened people had significantly higher proportions of malignancies are detected at stage I and II, and this led to quantitative reductions in the risk of mortality by breast, cervical, colorectal, lung, and prostate cancers. This data highlights the crucial role of timely screening in the process of changing the disease pathways and improving survival rates in the long term. Meanwhile, qualitative investigations revealed that knowledge of patients, access to services, and compliance with follow-up, as well as a response by the health system, all significantly influence the success of screening. The participants emphasized that effective communication, culturally sensitive outreach, and navigation

assistance were all that assisted individuals in attending to the screening and follow-up. Nevertheless, such obstacles as absence of money, difficulties accessing screenings, and insufficient health literacy continued to impede the participation of all individuals. The synthesis of anecdotal and quantitative evidence demonstrates that screening programs are most effective when an element of a health system that promotes a healthy process of early involvement, sustained contact and patient empowerment. This research indicates that marginalized groups continue to be unreachable despite positive results. This demonstrates that we must be able to concentrate on specific interventions, resource distribution and policy based action to seal these gaps. The findings indicate that cancer screening remains among the most reliable methods of controlling cancer among people in a population, yet it can be maximized only when more efforts are made to enhance its accessibility, quality, and follow-up channels. The further work is to focus on the improvement of risk-stratified screening models, technology innovations, and community-based outreach to ensure that the benefits of early diagnosis and death-rates decrease are fairly shared across the demographic lines.

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