

OBJECTIVES:

Previous literature shows that 80-90% of cancer cases are associated with preventable external causes. The oncology care centers (OCCs) that make up the Brazilian public health system (SUS) offer specialized and comprehensive care to cancer patients. Although they are not obliged to act in primary prevention, they represent an essential source of information for the population because they are recognized as centers of excellence in their respective regions. Our objective was to analyze if (and how) OCCs have been acting in preventive campaigns against cancer.

METHODS:

This work qualitatively analyzed the website of the 337 OCCs (Figure 1). Primary prevention measures were identified and classified according to the tumor type and the different external causes of cancer involving nutrition, diet, and physical activity, as proposed by the National Cancer Institute (INCA).

RESULTS:

Despite the importance of disseminating information in digital media, only 85% (292) of OCCs had a website. Of these, only 8.2% (24) dealt with prevention information, and 5.5% (16) had an area exclusively dedicated to cancer prevention.

Few websites brought information on primary prevention (6.4%), and in general, these were focused on general oncology (3.1%), prostate cancer (2.7%), cervical cancer (2.4%), and breast cancer (2.0%), which are among the most frequent tumor types in the country. Despite the economic importance and effectiveness of primary prevention measures for colorectal cancer, only four websites dealt with the topic. In general, prevention measures did not involve INCA's suggestions for educational campaigns related to exposure to external factors.

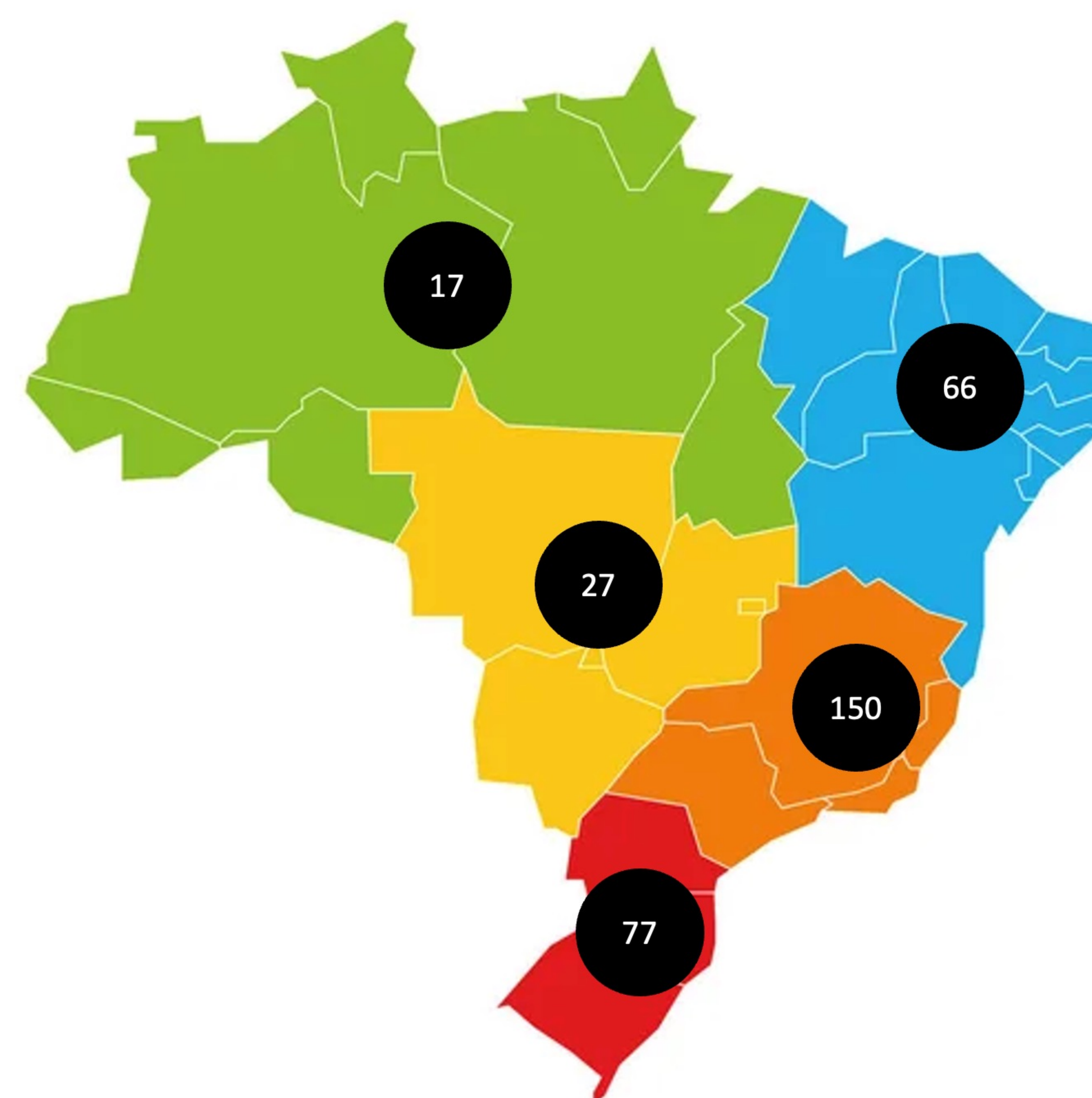


Figure 1: Number of OCCs per Brazilian Regions

CONCLUSIONS:

Despite primary prevention being identified as the most effective strategy for cancer control and potentially reducing the economic burden of the disease, the SUS has little explored the potential of OCCs to bring information and engage the population in educational campaigns through digital communication.

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