Abstract
Objectives. To estimate national and district cancer incidence for 18 major cancer sites in Colombia. Materials and Methods. National and district incidence was estimated by applying a set of age, sex and site-specific incidence/mortality ratios, obtained from a population-based cancer registry, to national and regional mortality. The work was done in Bogotá (Colombia) and Lyon (France) between May 2003 and August 2004. Results. The annual total number of cases expected (all cancers but skin) was 17 819 in men and 18 772 in women. Among males the most frequent cancers were those of the prostate (45.8 per 100 000), stomach (36.0), and lung (20.0). In females the most frequent were those of the cervix uteri (36.8 per 100 000), breast (30.0), and stomach (20.7). Districts with the lowest death certification coverage yielded the highest incidence rates. Conclusions. In the absence of national population-based cancer registry data, estimates of incidence provide valuable information at national and regional levels. As mortality data are an important source for the estimation, the quality of death certification should be considered as a possible cause of bias.

Keywords
incidence; neoplasms; epidemiology; Colombia.