

PALLIATIVE CARE IN GERMANY: AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY BASED ON REAL WORLD DATA

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Core Messages

- Palliative care provision reveals growing incidence rates in Germany. Approximately 279,170 patients per year initiate palliative care treatment.
- Mortality rates of patients suffering from palliative conditions achieve a correspondingly high level. Mortality was particularly high within the first 50 days of palliative treatment.
- The palliative care sector is of paramount importance for health care planning. As for many other purposes, RWD may serve as a valid information source for steering processes in this area.

Background and Objectives

The aging of cohorts with high birth rates, an increased life expectancy and changing preferences of society lead to a growing need for palliative care services.

The objective of this study was (i) to characterize patients receiving palliative care, (ii) to estimate the incidence and prevalence rates of palliative conditions and (iii) to estimate the 1-year all-cause mortality in patients receiving their first palliative care treatment based on German real world data (RWD) derived from a large statutory health insurance (SHI) database.

Methods

Information source was the InGef Research Database comprising data of four million people who are enrolled in German SHI companies. Case identification was based on specific outpatient and inpatient reimbursement codes indicating palliative treatment. The epidemiology of palliative conditions was estimated for the year 2015. The incidence rates of palliative conditions were assessed in patients who did not have documented palliative care services in the year prior to the observation period. One-year all-cause mortality in patients receiving their first palliative care treatment was analyzed using the Kaplan-Meier method.

Results

Overall, 14,522 patients were identified who experienced a first palliative care treatment in 2015. Of those, 55.3% were female. The mean age of patients with a first palliative care treatment was 76.9 years (SD: 13.4 years).

The general outpatient palliative care treatment (AAPV) was the initial care approach in 76.1% of the patients. 14.6% initially received an inpatient palliative care treatment, and 9.3% received specialized outpatient palliative care treatment (SAPV) as initial treatment.

The age-standardized incidence rate of palliative conditions was 37.1 per 10,000 persons in women and 31.2 per 10,000 in men. The incidence of palliative care conditions increased with advancing age and was highest in patients aged 90 years or older (546.0 per 10,000 persons) [Figure 1].

The age-standardized prevalence of palliative conditions was 54.8 per 10,000 persons in women and 45.6 per 10,000 persons in men. The prevalence of palliative care conditions also increased with advancing age and was highest in patients aged 90 years or older (762.6 per 10,000 persons) [Figure 2].

The 1-year all-cause mortality was 67.5 % among patients receiving their first palliative care treatment. Mortality was higher in SAPV patients (86.1%) and in patients with an inpatient palliative care treatment (86.1%) compared to those receiving AAPV as initial therapeutic approach (60.8%). Mortality was particularly high within the first 50 days (≈43%) [Figure 3].

Mortality was similar between men and women during the first 150 days of follow-up. Afterwards, a slightly higher mortality in men compared to women could be observed [Figure 4].

Figure 1: Age-stratified incidence of palliative care conditions in 2015

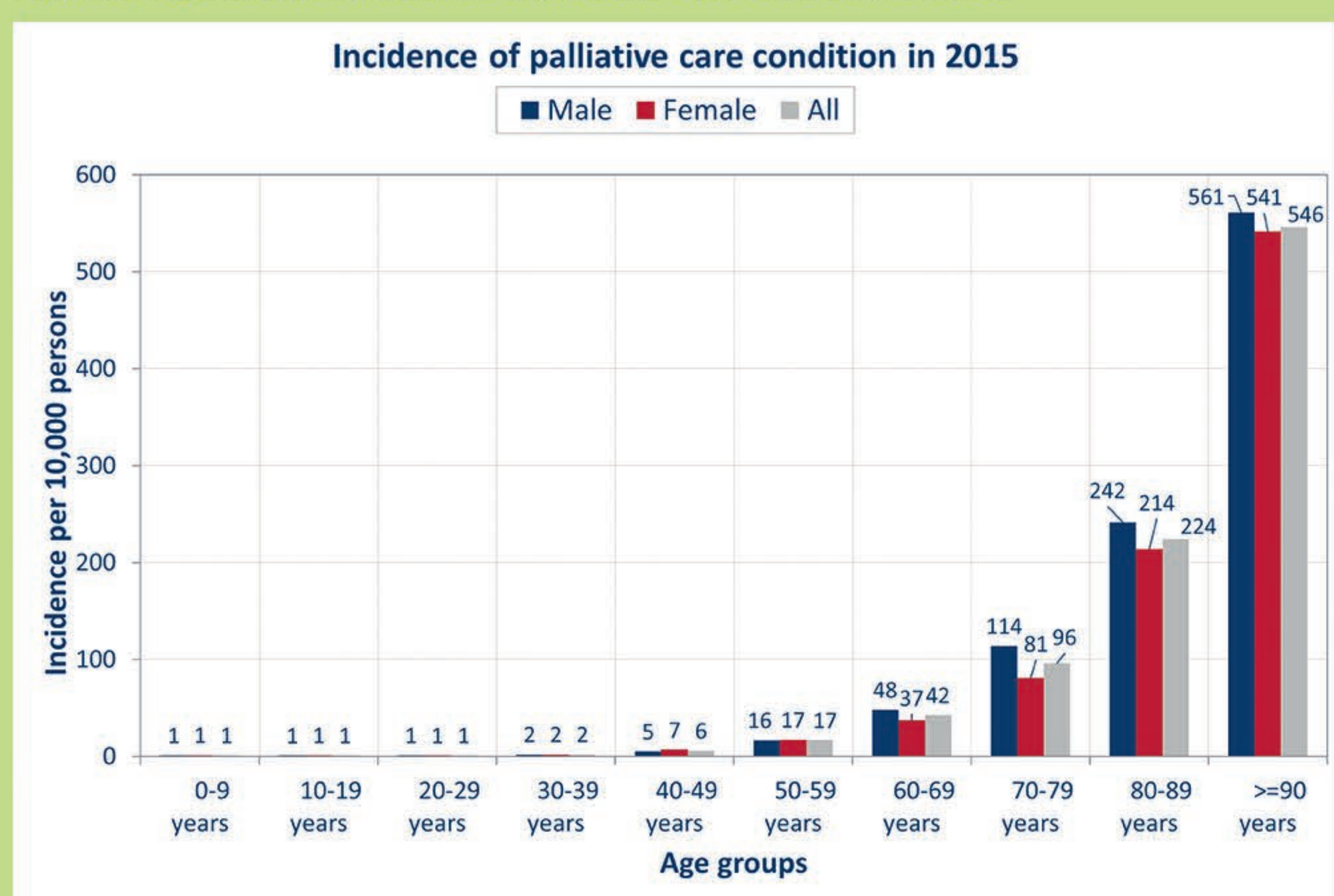


Figure 2: Age-stratified prevalence of palliative care conditions in 2015

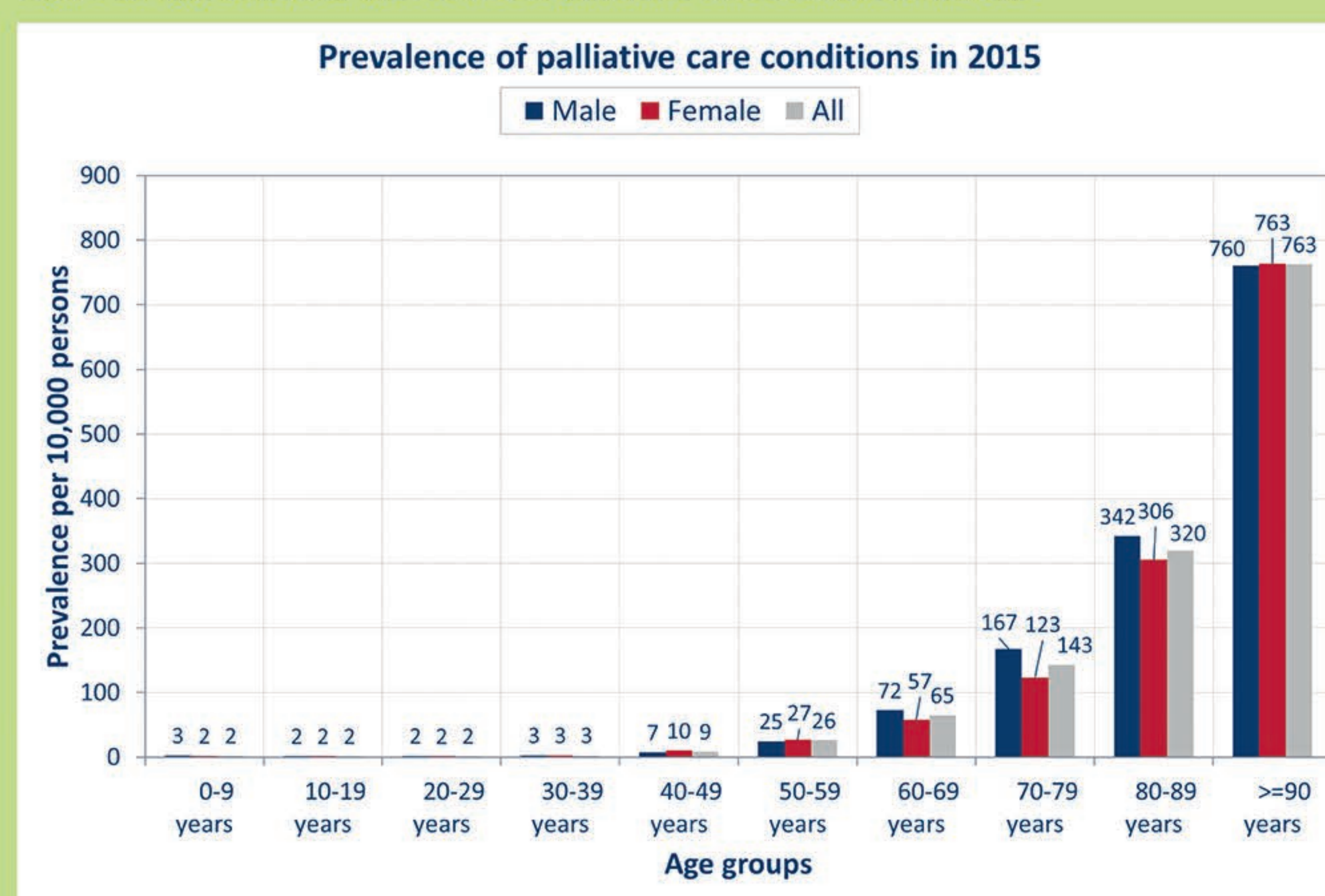


Figure 3: One-year all-cause mortality after first palliative care treatment stratified by initial type of palliative care treatment in 2015

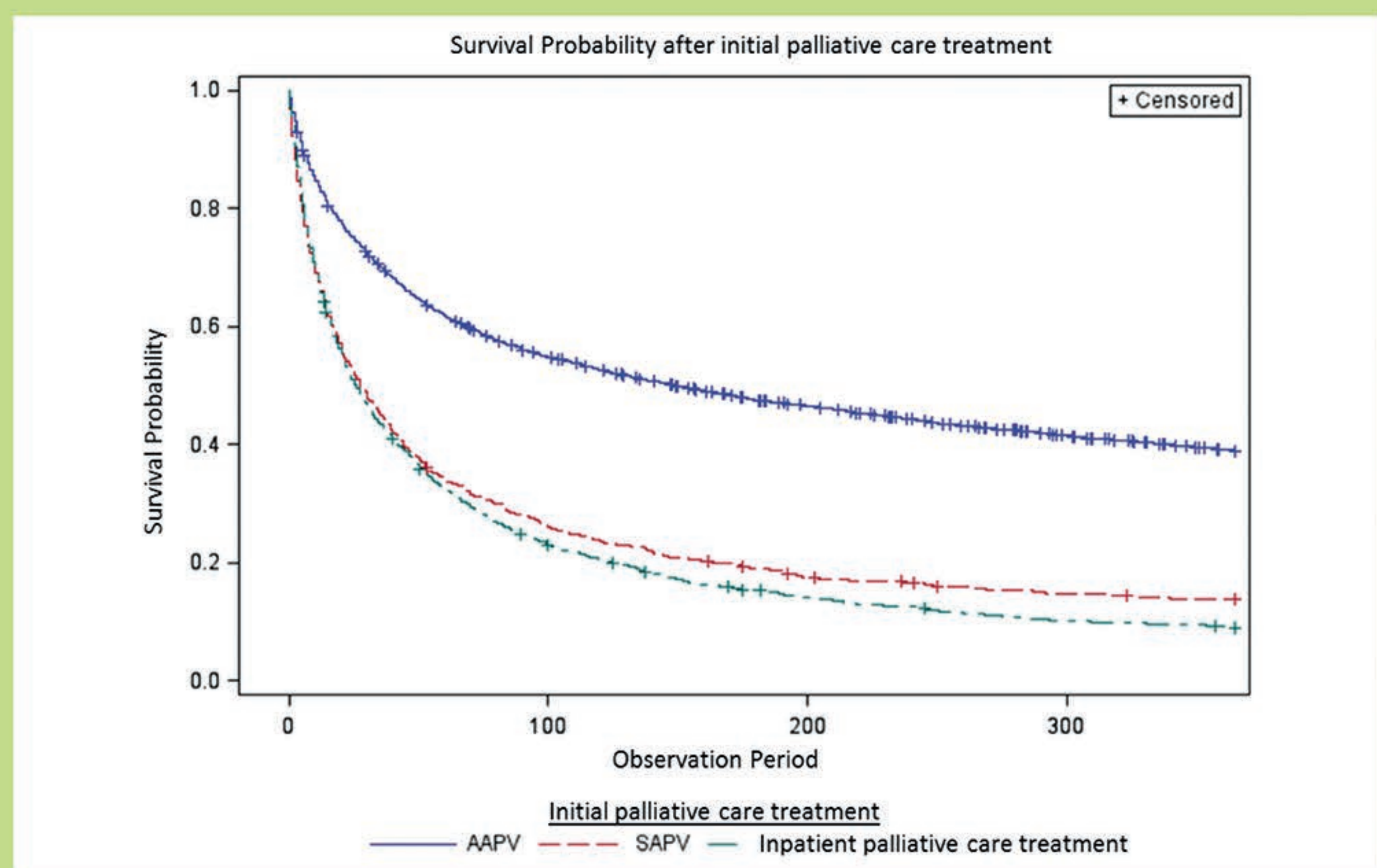
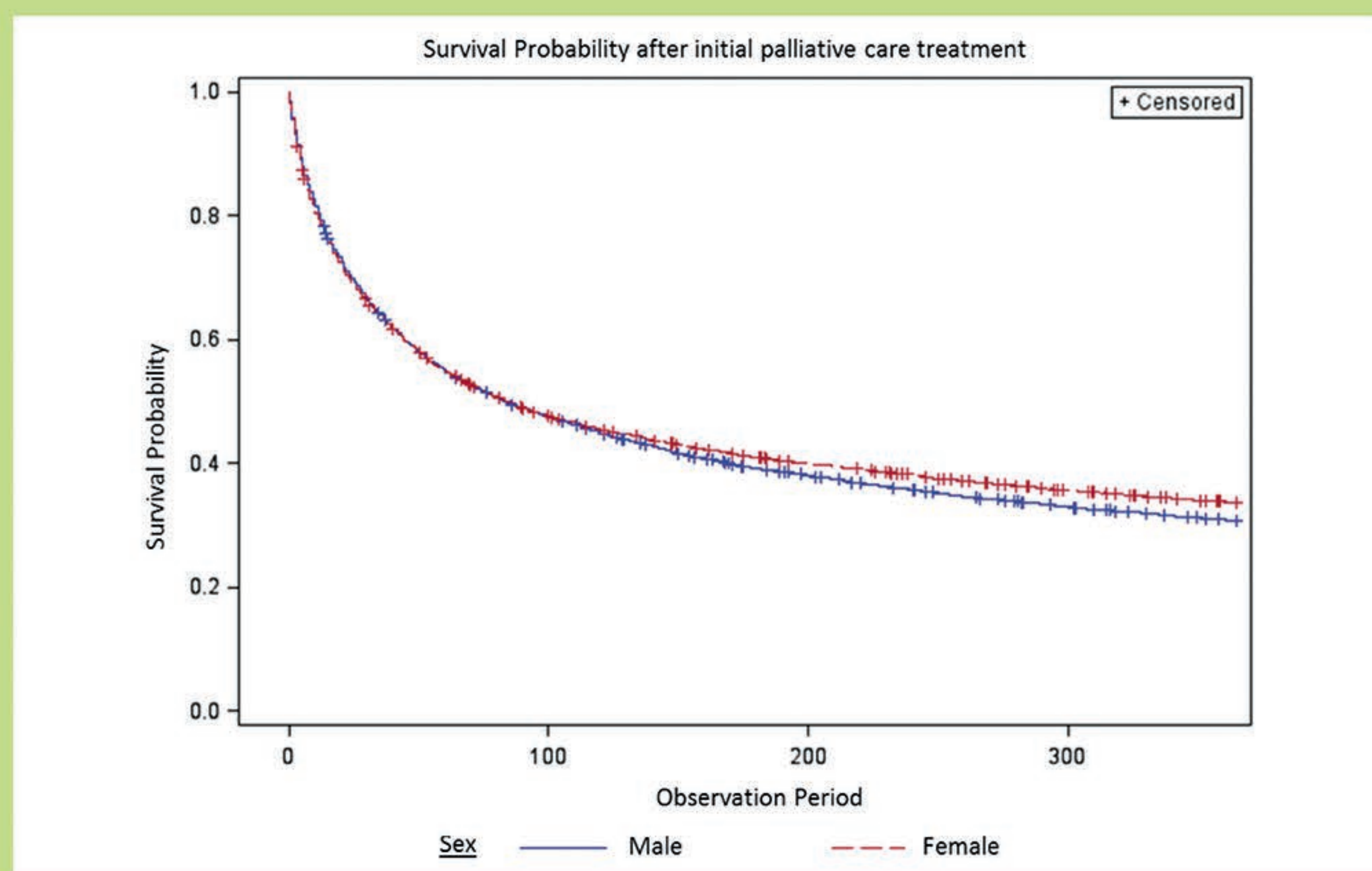


Figure 4: One-year all-cause mortality after first palliative care treatment stratified by sex in 2015



Acknowledgement

The authors thank Sanofi-Aventis Deutschland GmbH for funding the study.