

Burden of Cancer in Louisiana

All Cancers Combined

Cancer control through research, prevention, early detection, and advocacy is one of the most important health initiatives facing our country and state. It is estimated that 563,700 Americans will lose their lives to cancer in 2004, including about 9,700 in Louisiana. Louisiana ranked number three in 2001 for overall cancer death rates, behind Washington, D.C., and Kentucky.

The American Cancer Society predicts that 1,368,030 people will be diagnosed with cancer in the United States in 2004; of these, about 23,540 live in Louisiana. In general, the incidence rates for cancer in Louisiana tend not to exceed national rates for all sites combined. Discussions of the individual cancer types to be targeted by the Louisiana Cancer Control Partnership (LCCP) are found on the following pages.

For white women and African-American men and women, the incidence rates for all cancers combined were significantly lower than for their national counterparts in 1996–2000, but white men's rates were significantly higher in Louisiana than nationally. Table 1 summarizes incidence rates for cancers of all sites combined in the state and the nation. (All rates in this summary are age adjusted to the U.S. 2000 standard.) In both the United States and Louisiana, the incidence rates for men were much higher than those for women, and the rates for African-American men surpassed those for white men while those for African-American women were the lowest.

Table 1. Cancer Incidence Rates, All Sites Combined, per 100,000, 1996–2000				
	White men	White women	African American men	African American women
Louisiana	587.6*	401.9**	664.0**	386.4 **
U.S.	555.9	431.8	696.8	406.3
* Louisiana rate is statistically significantly higher than the U.S. rate. ** Louisiana rate is statistically significantly lower than the U.S. rate.				

Although incidence rates in Louisiana tend to be lower than or similar to those for the nation as a whole except for white men, mortality rates from cancer are higher in Louisiana than in the United States for all four race/sex groups (Table 2). As with

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incidence rates, the mortality rates are higher for men than for women in both the state and the nation. In both geographic areas, mortality is higher for African-American men and women than for whites even though African-American women experience lower incidence than white women. These statistics indicate that African-American men and women bear an unequal burden of cancer. The need for improved access to care and early detection among the medically underserved population is a focus of this LCCP document.

Table 2. Cancer Mortality Rates, All Sites Combined, per 100,000, 1996–2000				
	White men	White women	African American men	African American women
Louisiana	283.6*	175.0*	394.9*	214.1*
U.S.	249.5	166.9	356.2	198.6
* Louisiana rate is statistically significantly higher than the U.S. rate.				

Site-Specific Cancers

The five most common cancers among men in Louisiana, 1996–2000, were cancers of the prostate (28% of total incidence cases), lung (20%), colon & rectum (12%), bladder (5%), and non-Hodgkin lymphoma (4%). During the same period, the five most common cancers among women were those of the breast (30% of total incidence cases), lung (14%), colon & rectum (12%), corpus uteri (4%) and non-Hodgkin lymphoma (4%). These were also the most frequent diagnoses nationally, except that among women nationwide, ovarian cancer ranked higher than non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

The Louisiana Cancer Control Partnership will focus its efforts on six types of cancer that can be prevented in large part or can be detected at an early stage, when treatment is more effective. The LCCP goals are:

- to reduce the incidence of lung cancer and skin melanomas by lowering the exposure to risk factors
- to reduce the morbidity and mortality from breast, cervical, colon & rectal, and prostate cancers through early detection screening programs, followed by appropriate treatment

Data on incidence, mortality, and behaviors relating to these six cancers are vital to planning intervention programs. A summary of this information is presented below for each site.

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1. *Lung Cancer:* Smoking is the most preventable cause of death in our society, as tobacco use is responsible for nearly one in five deaths in the United States. According to the American Cancer Society, lung cancer mortality rates are about 22 times higher for current men who smoke and 12 times higher for current women who smoke than for people who have never smoked. Louisiana ranked 8th for white men, 12th for white women, 2nd for African-American men, and 19th for African-American women in lung cancer mortality rates in the United States in 1996-2000. During the period 1996-2000, an average of 3,341 cases of lung cancer were diagnosed in Louisiana each year, and 2,774 people died from the disease. Table 3 reports the incidence rates for Louisiana and the U.S. All four race/sex groups had higher mortality rates than their national counterparts (see Table 4) even though Louisiana African-American women had significantly lower incidence rates than the U.S.

Table 3. Cancer Incidence Rates, Lung & Bronchus, per 100,000, 1996-2000				
	White men	White women	African American men	African American women
Louisiana	112.4*	57.3*	139.0*	47.9**
U.S.	79.4	51.9	120.4	54.8
*Louisiana rate is statistically significantly higher than the U.S. rate. ** Louisiana rate is statistically significantly lower than the U.S. rate.				

Table 4. Cancer Mortality Rates, Lung & Bronchus, per 100,000, 1996-2000				
	White men	White women	African American men	African American women
Louisiana	95.5*	45.2*	128.2*	42.7
U.S.	78.1	41.5	107.0	40.0
*Louisiana rate is statistically significantly higher than the U.S. rate.				

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The above data show that reducing lung cancer incidence and mortality rates through the implementation of a comprehensive tobacco control program must be the highest priority of the Louisiana Cancer Control Partnership.

2. *Breast Cancer:* Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, accounting for nearly one in three cancers diagnosed among American women. In Louisiana, 1996–2000, an average of 3,184 women were diagnosed annually with breast cancer, 411 with *in situ* disease and 2,773 with invasive breast cancer. As Table 5 shows, Louisiana mortality rates approximated the national levels even though the state’s incidence rates were significantly below the national average. Both nationally and in the state, white women had higher incidence than African Americans, but the latter group was more likely to die from the disease.

Table 5. Incidence and Mortality Rates, Female Breast Cancer, per 100,000, 1996–2000				
	Incidence		Mortality	
	Whites	African Americans	Whites	African Americans
Louisiana	125.0**	114.6**	27.3	38.2
U.S.	140.8	121.7	27.2	35.9

** Louisiana rate is statistically significantly lower than the U.S. rate.

The American Cancer Society recommends annual mammograms for women aged forty and older to detect breast cancer at an early stage. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, the percentages of Louisiana African-American women and of white women receiving mammography in 2001 were the same, 73.0% and 72.7%, respectively. According to the same survey, whereas 73% of women with a household income of \$50,000 or more reported receiving screening in the past year, the number dropped to 64% among women with a household income less than \$15,000 per year. Clearly, health initiatives aimed at detecting breast cancer early among African-American and low-income women are integral to the reduction of breast cancer deaths in the state.

3. *Cervical Cancer:* In Louisiana, 1996–2000, an average of 258 women were diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer each year. Table 6 shows that the cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates for Louisiana African-American women exceeded those for their national counterparts. Louisiana ranked 4th among African-American women for cervical cancer mortality between 1997 and 2001. These data underline the need to increase screening among African-American women in Louisiana.

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Table 6. Incidence and Mortality Rates, Cervical Cancer, per 100,000, 1996–2000				
	Incidence		Mortality	
	Whites	African Americans	Whites	African Americans
Louisiana	9.3	17.2*	2.7	6.8
U.S.	9.2	12.4	2.7	5.9

* Louisiana rate is statistically significantly higher than the U.S. rate.

4. *Colon & Rectal Cancer*: Colon & rectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the third leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States and in Louisiana among both men and women. Annually, 1996-2000, an average of 2,369 new cases were diagnosed in Louisiana, and 948 deaths were attributed to the disease. The Louisiana colon & rectal cancer incidence rates approximate the U. S. rates for all but white men (Table 7), but the state’s mortality rates are higher than the national average for all four race/sex groups (Table 8). The removal of potentially precancerous polyps is a proven method to prevent colon & rectal tumors. According to the Behavioral Risk Surveillance System in 2002, 61% of Louisianians aged 50+ reported in 2002 that they had never had a colorectal cancer screening with a fecal occult blood test, regardless of gender or race. This is one of the lowest compliance rates in the nation for cancer screening, and it shows that for all race-sex groups, colon & rectal cancer early detection awareness and promotion activities are needed.

Table 7. Cancer Incidence Rates, Colon & Rectum, per 100,000, 1996–2000				
	White men	White women	African American men	African American women
Louisiana	72.9*	46.7	74.7	53.6
U.S.	64.1	46.2	72.4	56.2

*Louisiana rate is statistically significantly higher than the U.S. rate

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Table 8. Cancer Mortality Rates, Colon & Rectum, per 100,000, 1996–2000				
	White men	White women	African American men	African American women
Louisiana	27.6*	17.6	39.1*	25.3
U.S.	25.3	17.5	34.6	24.6
*Louisiana rate is statistically significantly higher than the U.S. rate.				

5. Prostate Cancer: Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among men and is the second leading cause of cancer death for men in United States and Louisiana. In Louisiana during the five-year period, 1996–2000, an annual average of 2,963 men were diagnosed with the disease, and 552 died from it. Table 9 shows that incidence and mortality rates were markedly higher among African-American men than among whites, both in Louisiana and nationally. Although incidence rates were significantly lower in the state than in the U.S., the Louisiana mortality rates were close to the U.S. averages, indicating that Louisiana men had worse survival with prostate cancer than their national counterparts.

Table 9. Incidence and Mortality Rates, Prostate Cancer, per 100,000, 1996–2000				
	Incidence		Mortality	
	Whites	African Americans	Whites	African Americans
Louisiana	157.2**	223.3**	30.6	70.6
U.S.	164.3	272.1	30.2	73.0
** Louisiana rate is statistically significantly lower than the U.S. rate.				

6. Melanoma of the Skin: The American Cancer Society estimates that more than one million new cases of basal and squamous cell cancers of the skin are diagnosed each year. In addition, 55,100 people in the United States will be diagnosed with melanoma of the skin, the most serious type of skin cancer, in 2004. In Louisiana, 1996–2000, an annual

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average of 369 melanomas were reported, and an annual average of 90 deaths from melanoma occurred.

According to the Louisiana Tumor Registry, the white male incidence rate for skin melanoma in 1996-2000 was 15.1 while the female rate was 9.4. Those for African American men and women were 1.3 and 1.0, respectively, per 100,000. The Louisiana melanoma incidence rates for whites were significantly below those for the U.S. mortality rates for Louisiana white men were also significantly low while the rates for the other three race/sex groups were consistent with the U.S. Nationally and in the state, white men developed melanoma at a higher rate than white women, and the rates for African Americans were very low. Another focus of the Louisiana Cancer Control Partnership, the reduction of exposure to harmful light rays from the sun or tanning booths, will help reduce the impact of skin cancer.

Notes:

U.S. incidence rate estimates presented in this report are from the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) program of the National Cancer Institute.

Statistical significance: $p \leq 0.05$.