

Cancer deaths higher in rural America, CDC reports

July 7 2017

(HealthDay)—Cancer death rates are declining overall in the United States, but they are higher and falling more slowly in rural America, a new federal government report shows.

"While geography alone can't predict your risk of cancer, it can impact prevention, diagnosis and treatment opportunities—and that's a significant public health problem in the U.S.," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, acting director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The report, published July 6, is the first to detail cancer differences and death rates in urban and rural America. Part of the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, it found:

- Cancer death rates were higher in rural areas—180 deaths for every 100,000 people, compared to 158 per 100,000 in urban areas.
- Cancer [death rates](#) fell 1 percent a year in rural America, compared with 1.6 percent in urban areas.
- Overall cancer rates were slightly lower in rural areas (442 cases per 100,000) than in urban areas (457 per 100,000). But rural America has higher rates of several cancers linked to tobacco use, including lung cancer, along with some that screening can prevent, such as colon and cervical cancers.

Electra Paskett, co-leader of the cancer control research program at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center, was not surprised

by the findings.

"We have been conducting research and programming in rural America for many years now because we were aware of the higher incidence and mortality for the afore named cancers in this area. In Appalachia, a predominately rural area in the U.S., we have known that cancer was the leading cause of [death](#) for some time—there are many factors in rural [areas](#) that contribute to these rates," she said.

The director of CDC's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control said it's complex.

"Cancer—its causes, its prevention, and its treatment—is complicated," said Dr. Lisa Richardson, an oncologist.

"When I treat cancer patients, I don't do it alone—other health care professionals and family members help the patient during and after treatment. The same is true for community-level preventive interventions. Partnerships are key to reducing cancer incidence and the associated disparities," Richardson said in a CDC news release.

The CDC said rural health care providers can help close the gaps by promoting habits that lower cancer risk. These include reducing tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke; limiting exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun and tanning beds; and encouraging people to be active and eat right.

CDC also urged rural providers to make increased use of screening tests such as colonoscopy and Pap tests, as well as vaccinations against cancer-related diseases such as HPV and hepatitis B.

"With targeted public health efforts and interventions, we can close the growing [cancer](#) gap between rural and urban Americans," Schuchat said

in the news release.

More information: The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more on [cancer prevention](#).

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Citation: Cancer deaths higher in rural America, CDC reports (2017, July 7) retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-07-cancer-deaths-higher-rural-america.html>

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