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State reviews Genesee County cancer incidence in response to resident requests

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has published [a review of cancer incidence for Genesee County](#). This cancer data review was conducted in response to Genesee County citizen requests, and not because of any documented cluster of cancer cases.

For the review, MDHHS examined annual cancer rates (1985-2015) for both Genesee County and the state for the following cancer types: lung, prostate, breast, colorectal and all cancer types combined. The department also measured if there were more cancer cases than expected in individual Genesee County ZIP codes compared to the county as a whole. This was examined for years 1985 to 2015 for 22 cancer types and all cancers combined.

The review found:

- Genesee County's total cancer incidence rate was higher than the state's for most years between 1985 and 2015. Rates of breast, colorectal, lung and prostate cancer were not higher than the state for most years during 1985 to 2015.
- When compared to the Genesee County, the frequency of cancer was higher than expected for some cancer types in some ZIP codes, but lower than expected for some cancer types in other ZIP codes.

"This report is a descriptive review and summary of cancer incidence in Genesee County, and not a health study or public health investigation," said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health. "Data reviews of the Cancer Registry cannot identify which life history events or environmental exposures may have contributed to the occurrence of a cancer."

When reviewing several cancer types for multiple geographic areas, as was done for this report, it is common to find patterns of increased incidence in some geographic areas and decreased incidence in others.

There are limitations to the review that should be noted:

- Cancer registry data from the Michigan Cancer Surveillance Program does not have the information necessary to determine what life history might have contributed to a person's cancer or whether cancer incidence is related to any environmental contamination.
- The report only includes cancer cases for residents of the area of analysis at the time of their diagnosis. It is possible that people relocating to or leaving the area of analysis could have affected the findings. Also, cancer measured in the area of analysis during this study period could be related to exposure or life history that occurred many years before the study period.

Based on this review, MDHHS is not planning additional analyses of the Cancer Registry data for Genesee County at this time. MDHHS will continue to publish annual cancer incidence rates by county on the MDHHS website for the Michigan Cancer Surveillance Program.

Further, MDHHS will continue to work with stakeholders in Genesee County to discuss concerns about environmental exposures, health and how to connect residents with preventative services for cancer.

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