



Cancer death rates high in Lake County

SEPTEMBER 17, 1992 12:00 AM • [NANCY COLTUN WEBSTER](#)

HAMMOND - Lake County's annual cancer mortality rate is 191 deaths per 100,000 compared with 171 per 100,000 for the nation, according to figures released by the State Department of Health.

The figures are from statistics being evaluated as part of a federally funded cancer intervention study.

"The program is meant to get states to use their data on mortality and morbidity and determine cancer risk factors and the effect of getting early treatment," said Marylou Fleissner, state epidemiologist.

The mortality rates are an average of deaths between 1984 through 1988, the latest data available. Indiana's rate is 178 per 100,000.

Although Lake County ranks high, the results are not unique, said Tom Reynolds of the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Md.

"Rates vary. For instance, the state of Maryland is 192.3 per 100,000.

What's important is to look at why the rate is high," he said.

The State Department of Health will present regional cancer data during a public forum at 6 tonight at the Barbara Wesson Center, 300 W. 21st St., Gary.

Lake County also is ahead of the U.S. mortality rate for the following cancers:

- * Lung cancer: 52.8 per 100,000 for Lake County compared with 46.7 per 100,000 for the nation.

- * Colon-rectum cancer: 25 per 100,000 for the county compared with 21 per 100,000.

- * Breast cancer 31 per 100,000 for the county compared with 27 per 100,000.

* Cervical cancer 4.1 per 100,000 for the county compared with 3.2 per 100,000.

The forum will allow health-care professionals and residents to tell what obstacles they face in providing and getting treatment. They also will discuss whether there are enough cancer screening sites and whether state-of-the-art services are available.

The forums are part of the \$15 million study that spans 11 years. Twenty-two states, including Indiana and Illinois, are participating in the cooperative agreement with the National Cancer Institute.

The state is researching whether people have enough access to screening programs so the disease can be caught early, if care is standard in all regions and the lifestyle of cancer victims, Fleissner said.

Smoking is a factor mentioned frequently.

The American Cancer Society's 1992 report says cigarette smoking is responsible for 30 percent of all cancer deaths. It also says people who smoke two or more packs of cigarettes a day have lung cancer mortality rates 15 to 25 times greater than nonsmokers.

"Tobacco kills 9,600 Hoosiers a year," said Bill Vinovich, area vice president of the American Cancer Society, 7026 Kennedy Ave., Hammond. "We are trying to promote tobacco-free lifestyles and protect nonsmokers."