



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 20, 2009

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Lung Cancer and Tobacco Hit Minorities Hard

April 19-25 is Minority Cancer Awareness Week

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) marked Minority Cancer Awareness Week by reporting that lung cancer mortality and incidence rates in Wisconsin show that some racial and ethnic groups are disproportionately at risk for lung cancer, with tobacco largely to blame.

“Lung cancer is still Wisconsin’s leading cancer killer and the rates in minority populations are significantly higher,” said DHS Secretary Karen Timberlake. “While smoking rates for most racial groups have declined since 1990, the African American smoking rate remains stubbornly high.”

During 2001-2005, African Americans had the highest lung cancer incidence rates of any racial group, and African American males had about an 80 percent higher incidence rate than white males. American Indians had the second highest lung cancer incidence, with a higher rate among males than females.

African-Americans also experience the highest mortality rate, with American Indians second, and whites third. The most recent statistics from the DHS 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System put the African American smoking rate at 30.1 percent compared to 18.8 percent for whites.

According to the American Lung Association, tobacco use and exposure are responsible for more than 85 percent of lung cancer cases in the United States.

“Preventing tobacco use and encouraging current tobacco users to quit will greatly reduce the number of people getting and dying from lung cancer,” said Secretary Karen Timberlake. “There is good evidence from other states that Governor Doyle’s proposals to increase the cigarette sales tax and implement a statewide workplace smoking ban will further reduce smoking rates in Wisconsin.”

With some cancers, early detection is essential to successful treatment. However, prevention – not screening – is the most effective strategy for lung cancer.

“Everyone should know that smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke increases their risk for lung cancer, a disease that kills far more often than it is cured,” Timberlake said. “Screening isn’t the answer. Quitting smoking and eliminating exposure to tobacco smoke will rapidly lower your risk of lung cancer.”

Smokers who want to quit can receive free assistance by calling the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669).

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Summary of Key 2001-2005 Data:

*African Americans had the highest lung cancer incidence rate (102.1 per 100,000) of any racial group.

*African American males had about 80 percent higher incidence rate than white males (144.9 and 79.4, per 100,000, respectively). African American females had 37 percent higher incidence rates than white females (73.3 and 53.3, per 100,000, respectively).

*American Indians had the second highest lung cancer incidence (82.7 per 100,000), with a higher rate among males (105.3 per 100,000) than females (66.8 per 100,000).

*African Americans experience the highest mortality rate (81.1 per 100,000), American Indians, second highest (63.2 per 100,000), and whites, third (48.2 per 100,000).

Please note: incidence data for 2005 are preliminary and unpublished; data for 2001-2004 are published in Wisconsin Cancer Incidence and Mortality 2000-2004 online at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wcrs/pdf/cancerwi0004.pdf>

For information about the Wisconsin Tobacco Control and Prevention efforts, visit <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/tobacco>

For more information on Wisconsin's Minority Health Program, visit <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/MinorityHealth/>

For information about Wisconsin Health statistics, including those on cancer, visit <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/stats/index.htm>

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