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RATES OF CANCER DIAGNOSES AND DEATHS CONSISTENT WITH RECENT HEADLINES ON LUNG AND BREAST CANCER

Report details cancer incidence and mortality in Northern California for past 17 years

FREMONT, CA – *March 26, 2007* – The Northern California Cancer Center is releasing new data about the rates of cancer in Northern California. The Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry (GBACR) Annual Report summarizes cancer incidence and mortality rates among diverse racial and ethnic groups in nine Bay Area counties from 1988 through 2004. These data have already led to important recent discoveries about how the rates of breast and lung cancer have changed over the past few years.

Lung cancer

The GBACR report confirms that lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer death in the Greater Bay Area, representing about 25 percent of all cancer deaths. However, our region continues to see declines in the incidence rates of lung cancer among males and white and Hispanic females. Although smoking remains the primary cause of lung cancer in the Bay Area, there are fewer people continuing or starting to smoke, and this trend is contributing to the decrease in lung cancer rates.

Recently making headlines was a study co-authored by several scientists at the Northern California Cancer Center, which showed that nonsmokers get lung cancer more often than previously thought, with women at higher risk than men.

“Taken together, the findings of our recent study and the registry data suggest that lung cancer remains a major public health problem, and a notable fraction of it is occurring in people who have never smoked,” notes study co-author and Northern California Cancer Center scientist Ellen Chang, Sc.D. “Identifying risk factors for non-smoking-related lung cancer is a particular priority as the population of non-smokers continues to grow.”

The study, “Lung Cancer Incidence in Never-Smokers,” was published in the February 10, 2007 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Breast cancer

Data from the Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry Annual Report show a sharp decline in breast cancer incidence rates for most women in the years 2003 and 2004—the years following the publication of results from the influential Women’s Health Initiative, which showed an increase in the risk of breast cancer among hormone therapy users.

Results of a recent analysis led by NCCC scientist Christina Clarke, Ph.D., revealed parallel declines in breast cancer and hormone therapy use in Northern California. Clarke’s analysis, the first to link a 68 percent drop in the prevalence of hormone therapy use to a 10 percent decrease in the incidence rate of breast cancer in Northern California through 2004, suggests that women who discontinue hormone therapy use may reduce their risk of breast cancer.

“By tracking these data, we can continue to monitor trends in breast cancer diagnoses and hormone replacement therapy use. Breast cancer remains the most frequently occurring cancer in women, and rates are still generally high in some Bay Area counties,” says Clarke.

Clarke’s study, “Recent Declines in Hormone Therapy Utilization and Breast Cancer Incidence: Clinical and Population-Based Evidence,” was published in the November 20, 2006 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Other cancer data

- Breast, prostate, lung, and colorectal cancers and non-Hodgkin lymphoma were the five most commonly diagnosed cancers from 1988 through 2004, accounting for 59 percent of all cancer diagnoses in the region.

- Lung, colorectal, breast, prostate, and pancreatic cancers were the five most common causes of cancer death, accounting for 55 percent of all cancer deaths in the Greater Bay Area.

The Northern California Cancer Center has operated the Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry, part of the statewide California Cancer Registry, since 1973. Through joint funding from the Center for Disease Control's National Program of Cancer Registries, the State of California, and the National Cancer Institute, the Registry's mission is to collect statewide cancer data and conduct surveillance and research into the causes, controls and cures of cancer. The registry report, "Cancer Incidence and Mortality in the Greater Bay Area 1988-2004," covers Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. For copies of the report, go to:

www.nccc.org/cancer_report.html

About Northern California Cancer Center

The Northern California Cancer Center (www.nccc.org) is an established, nationally recognized leader dedicated to understanding the causes and prevention of cancer and to improve the quality of life for individuals living with cancer. NCCC has been working with scientists, educators, patients, clinicians, and community leaders successfully since 1974, and is an active partner with Stanford University's Comprehensive Cancer Center. NCCC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit with over 170 employees and a \$15 million operating budget.

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