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Cancer-related health disparities remain across racial and ethnic groups in the Greater San Francisco Bay Area, even as cancer deaths decline by 24% from 1988 - 2005

FREMONT, CA – *April 24, 2007* - The Northern California Cancer Center's **2008 Cancer Incidence and Mortality in the Greater Bay Area Report** presents the most updated cancer rates and trends among the diverse racial and ethnic populations in nine Bay Area counties. During the period 1988-2005 the overall incidence rate of new cancers declined by 16% for males and 10% for females. However, black males continue to have the highest overall rates of cancer, while Asian/Pacific Islander women continued to experience the lowest overall rates. In 2005 black men and women continued to have the highest rate of lung cancer among any racial/ethnic group while white women continued to have the highest rates of breast cancer. Cancer mortality rates during this period declined by 27% for men and 21% for women. Lung cancer was found to be the leading cause of death in males and females of most racial/ethnic groups.

In 2003, incidence rates of invasive breast cancer declined sharply. This report confirms that these declines, well-described in the worldwide media, persisted through the years 2004 and 2005. Detailed studies have shown that the decline was generally limited to estrogen receptor-positive tumors occurring in women aged 50 years and over. Research is ongoing at the Northern California Cancer Center to understand if the breast cancer declines are temporary and how they relate to changes in women's use of hormone replacement therapy and mammography.

Liver cancer incidence rates remain higher among Asians/Pacific Islanders than other groups, particularly for males. In other racial/ethnic groups, liver cancer incidence has been increasing over time. Rates of liver cancer are higher in San Francisco County than other counties.

Cancer data in this report come from the Northern California Cancer Center's Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry, which is part of the statewide California Cancer Registry. Through joint funding from the National Cancer Institute, the State of California, and the Centers for Disease Control's National Program of Cancer Registries, the Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry collects cancer data and conducts surveillance and research into the causes, controls and cures of cancer for the populations of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties.

“The Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry is an outstanding resource for understanding patterns and trends in cancer and who it disproportionately affects,” said **Scarlett Lin Gomez, Ph.D.**, Associate Director of Surveillance Research, Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry. “The ethnic and racial diversity of the Bay Area makes our registry an important resource for examining cancer patterns and trends in groups like Chinese and Filipinos.”

“What is so important about the cancer registry data is that it includes everyone who gets cancer, regardless of whether they were diagnosed and treated at a research hospital or a community hospital,” said **Tina Clarke, Ph.D.**, of the Northern California Cancer Center and Associate Director, Surveillance Research, Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry. “However, aggressive new privacy regulations and legislation are making it more difficult to assess disparities in cancer across population groups. Our cancer surveillance systems have always had stringent protections in place to ensure patient confidentiality, so I worry that the new policies and regulations will tie up research already hampered by funding cuts, such as that the Registry has received due to state budget deficits.”

The 2008 Cancer Incidence and Mortality in the Greater Bay Area report can be accessed online at www.nccc.org/annual_cancer_report. To compare cancer rates in the Greater Bay Area with statewide cancer rates, you can visit the California Cancer Registry at <http://www.cancer-rates.info/ca/>.

About the Northern California Cancer Center:

The Northern California Cancer Center (www.nccc.org) is a nationally recognized leader in understanding the causes and prevention of cancer and in improving the quality of life for individuals living with cancer. The organization has been working with scientists, educators, patients, clinicians, and community leaders since 1974. NCCC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with 145 employees and a \$15 million operating budget.

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