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State Cancer Registry Commemorates 40 Years

Data guides prevention efforts, research, treatment

New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal today recognized the 40th anniversary of the New Jersey State Cancer Registry (NJSCR), noting that the data collected has served as a guiding tool in improving public health.

Launched in October 1978 in response to New Jersey having the highest cancer mortality rate in the nation, the NJSCR within the New Jersey Department of Health collects cancer surveillance data on all cancer cases in New Jersey.

Maintaining the up-to-date registry of all newly diagnosed cancers has allowed New Jersey to participate in nationally recognized cancer epidemiology studies for nearly four decades and to apply appropriate preventive and control measures.

Each year, the NJSCR receives more than 300,000 case reports from more than 150 hospitals, physicians, pathology laboratories, and other reporting facilities.

"In the 40 years since the first records were reported, the NJSCR has collected detailed data on more than 1.9 million cases of cancer, each meticulously coded and edited to ensure quality and consistency by highly trained oncology data specialists," Commissioner Elnahal said. "This data is essential to guide prevention efforts and reduce mortality. Good data can lead to better research into improving health outcomes."

New Jersey now has the 13th lowest cancer mortality rate in the nation.

The NJSCR has been recognized for its high-quality data, receiving the highest honors by the three leading cancer surveillance programs in the nation: The North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Program of Cancer Registries (NPCR), and the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) program.

"Achieving excellence in cancer surveillance has been the hallmark of NJSCR's 40-year history," said NJSCR's current Director, Dr. Antoinette Stroup, an Associate Professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health and Rutgers Cancer Institute. Dr. Stroup noted that data collection is even more critical as the baby-boomer population ages and cancer treatment becomes more complex due to epidemiological and genetic discoveries.

As a result of its rigorous data collection and quality control methods, NJSCR data is routinely included in state and national publications of cancer incidence, mortality and survival statistics and is used by countless researchers in the study of cancer.

The NJSCR is jointly managed by the Department and the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

"The data provided by the NJSCR enables clinicians and scientists at Rutgers Cancer Institute, as well as researchers across the country, to better understand and respond to cancer concerns in our state," stated Rutgers Cancer Institute Director Steven K. Libutti, MD, FACS, who is also the senior vice president of oncology services at RWJBarnabas Health. "As New Jersey's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, our partnership with the Department of Health in managing the registry is key to achieving our mission of accelerating cancer research and improving patient outcomes."

The Department will commemorate the anniversary throughout the month of October. An informational display of posters, brochures and data briefs will be featured at several locations: at the annual meeting of the Oncology Registrars Association of New Jersey on October 4 and 5 in Atlantic City, the New Jersey State House from October 15 through October 19, and Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey on October 24.

For more information about the New Jersey State Cancer Registry and planned events for the 40th anniversary, visit <https://www.nj.gov/health/ces/>.

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