

Foreword

The new National Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) performance standards (specifically *Domain 1*) directs state, local and tribal governmental public health agencies to “*Conduct and disseminate assessments focused on population health status and public health issues facing the community*”. To that end, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health had produced a first of its kind report on cancer in our community.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death at the national, state, and local level. The American Cancer Society has estimated that approximately 1 of every 2 males and 1 of every 3 females will develop cancer in his or her lifetime and 1 of every 4 males and 1 of every 5 females will die from cancer. While most of us have experienced the devastating impact of cancer on our families and friends, these unfortunate statistics are not widely understood by most citizens.

What makes cancer different from many other health conditions is that the term “cancer” actually represents more than one disease. It refers to a group of more than 200 very different diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells, resulting from many factors. To add to this complexity, each type of cancer differs in its risk factors, prevention, early detection, treatment, and survival.

Unfortunately, many of the causes and risk factors for cancer are unknown. Experts commonly classify known risk factors into two major groups, non-modifiable and modifiable risk factors. Non-modifiable risk factors are factors that cannot be changed, such as a person’s age, gender, and family medical history (i.e. genetics). Modifiable risk factors are factors that can be changed, such as lifestyle choices (e.g. tobacco use, diet, physical activity level) and personal behaviors (e.g. using protective measures to avoid exposure to the sun, occupational hazards, and sexually transmitted diseases).

The Cuyahoga County Board recently expanded its disease surveillance capacity which has lead to this novel comprehensive cancer report for Cuyahoga County. For the first time, the annual number of newly diagnosed cancer cases and the number of cancer deaths are described at the individual community level. Additionally, the report shows differences in stage of diagnosis (which is a way to classify how early or late a cancer is getting diagnosed by a health care provider), which plays an important role in the overall prognosis and chances of survival for many types of cancer.

One of the major goals of this report is to create awareness of how much cancer exists within the communities of Cuyahoga County. Furthermore, the report describes differences in the cancer burden across many different levels including: gender, race/ethnicity, and geography. Where possible, it compares the amount of cancer in our community with national benchmarks such as the *Healthy People* goals as well as state levels.

Because of the comprehensive nature of the report, over 4,800 statistical comparisons were made attempting to identify any significant differences between the different

groups. By chance alone, we would expect to find at least 240 comparisons that would be considered statistically significantly higher or lower than expected. Because of the complex nature of cancer and its causes along with the limited data available for each case of cancer, this report does not address specific causes or reasons for the observed number or rates of cancer. Additionally, it is not meant to be an environmental assessment.

We are extremely hopeful that this report will serve as an important community resource for many different audiences and purposes. For example, we hope that: 1) the general public gains a better understanding of the amount of cancer that exists in their community; 2) the community service agencies use the report to help plan for existing and future resource needs; 3) the academic community uses the report to help guide future research initiatives; and 4) the local public health and medical community use the report to inform prospective preventive services and programming.

Recognizing the multiple audiences and purposes of the report, it has been separated into the following four major sections:

1. Introduction and highlights
2. County level profiles which show the number of newly diagnosed cases and cancer deaths by gender and race/ethnicity for 24 different sites/types of cancer
3. Community specific information on the number of newly diagnosed cases and cancer deaths
4. Methods and technical appendices

We are optimistic that the report will be a valuable resource for the community and hope to provide regular updates to the community.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Health would like to recognize all of the staff and community partners whose valuable energy and insight helped to inform this report. They are detailed in Section 1 on pages 2-3 on the report.