

Oklahoma

Cherokee Nation Cancer Summit 2006: Promoting the Cherokee Nation Cancer Plan and Cancer Issues Among Cherokee Citizens in Oklahoma

Public Health Problem

Cherokee Nation, situated in northeast Oklahoma, is the second largest tribe in the nation with over 250,000 tribal members, approximately half of whom live within the 14 county tribal jurisdictional service area. While overall cancer incidence for the Cherokee Nation is lower than that of Oklahoma, cancer mortality is markedly higher for American Indians in Cherokee Nation (229.9/100,000) than for both Oklahoma (162.7/100,000) and the United States (152.4/100,000).¹ Cancer mortality in Cherokee Nation is higher for every primary cancer site among Cherokee Nation residents. While rates are similar in Cherokee Nation, Oklahoma, and the United States, for cancers of the breast, lung, and bronchus, mortality rates are significantly higher for other sites such as colon, prostate, hematopoietic and kidney.¹

Preliminary observations from existing Cherokee Nation Cancer Registry suggest a correlation between elevated mortality rates and late-stage diagnosis, as well as delayed access to treatment. Disproportionate rates in the incidence of certain cancers, as well as the significantly higher mortality rates experienced in Cherokee Nation provided the foundation for the Cherokee Nation Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan.

Program Example

Supported by CDC's Comprehensive Cancer Control Planning Grant, Cherokee Nation was the first tribal nation to develop a Comprehensive Cancer Control (CCC) Plan for its population, published in 2006. The goal of this data-driven, systematic Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan is to address cancer priorities and sites in order to reduce the cancer burden in Cherokee Nation.

In October 2006, the Cherokee Nation successfully convened the first Cherokee Nation Cancer Summit. The goal of the summit was to promote the Cherokee Nation CCC Plan and its implementation, and increase awareness of cancer disparities among the community and its leaders, health professionals and all other entities interested in eliminating cancer disparities in Cherokee Nation. Participants were diverse representatives from the state and region, including key Cherokee Nation and state partners, cancer survivors, researchers, health care providers, legislators, and tribes.

Impact and Implications

The release of the Cherokee Nation CCC plan at the summit greatly increased credibility and awareness of the Cherokee Nation CCC Plan, its goals, and cancer disparities in Cherokee Nation. As a result of the summit, partnerships have been strengthened in these ways:

- Cherokee Nation is collaborating with Oklahoma Area Health Education Center on a survivorship initiative for rural citizens.
- Partnership with the University of Oklahoma (OU) has been greatly enhanced, with Cherokee Nation entering into a \$1.5 million Memorandum of Understanding with OU-Tulsa, for chronic disease care, including cancer care.
- Cherokee Nation is working with the Oklahoma Society of Clinical Oncologists on a clinical trials initiative to facilitate access to clinical trials in Oklahoma and surrounding states.

¹ Cherokee Nation Cancer Registry 1997-2001, Oklahoma Central Cancer Registry and CINA + Online