

Surveillance Research Program Bulletin

Web sites: surveillance.cancer.gov; seer.cancer.gov

Mission Statement

The Surveillance Research Program (SRP) directs the collection and analysis of data to answer key questions about cancer incidence, morbidity, mortality, and cancer-related health status in diverse regions and populations in the United States. As part of the SRP mission, the Cancer Statistics Branch (CSB) manages the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program, an integrated, comprehensive, multiple population-based cancer registry system authorized by the National Cancer Act of 1971.

SRP also provides leadership, through its Statistical Research and Applications Branch (SRAB), in developing statistical methodologies appropriate for analyzing trends and evaluating the impact of cancer control interventions as well as geographic, social, behavioral, genetic, and health care delivery factors on the cancer burden.

Summer 2008

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Highlights



Annual Stat*Chat Seminar

On April 10, 2008, Brenda Edwards, Ph.D., Surveillance Research Program (SRP) Associate Director, presented annual cancer statistics based on Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program data for 1975–2005. The seminar provided an overview of cancer rates and trends in incidence and mortality for the top 15 cancers diagnosed in men and women and for the major racial/ethnic populations. Dr. Edwards also discussed the impact on cancer rates in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and the effect on reporting cancer cases in the Veterans Administration’s (VA) change in policy regarding the release of patient information. Specific points included: (1) overall cancer death rates continue to drop; (2) female lung cancer mortality has stabilized after declining in recent years, female pancreatic cancer mortality is increasing, and male pancreatic cancer mortality is stable; and (3) adjustments were necessary to determine rates in response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the VA’s limiting release of data.



SEER Registry Locations

A video of the seminar can be viewed at videocast.nih.gov/Summary.asp?File=14422.

Network Meeting Recap

The Network for Cancer Control Research Among American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Populations (“the Network”) meeting, held April 2–4 in Rockville, MD,

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brought together more than 30 individuals from fields such as medicine, public health, and nursing. Sessions provided updates on various Native American

programs, initiatives, and research projects.

Representing a major Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences (DCCPS) initiative, the Network seeks to exchange information



Network Members

on cancer control research and improve community links to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), Cancer Information Service (CIS), and the American Cancer Society (ACS); increase involvement in cancer control activities within AI/AN academic communities; and foster mentorship and training of Native students. The group also established the Native CIRCLE (Cancer Information Resource Center and Learning Exchange, nativeamericanprograms.org/index-circle.html) for individuals involved in the education, care, and treatment of AI/AN populations.



2008 ICE Symposium



Marie-Jo Horner, M.S.P.H., Cancer Statistics Branch (CSB) epidemiologist, attended the Fourth Symposium of

the International Collaborative Effort (ICE) on Automating Mortality Statistics, held May 7–9 in Washington, DC. Presentations and workshops were related to the use of computer technology in collecting, processing, and using vital statistics.

“A major focus of the meeting was the Iris System, an automated coding system for causes of death that can be adapted in any language,” mentioned Ms. Horner.

Sponsored by the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ICE promotes sharing of knowledge and experience regarding using automated coding systems, international collaboration to develop and improve current systems, the transition to ICD-10 for mortality, and establishing mechanisms for technical support for automated systems.

Cherokee Nation Cancer Summit

Barry Miller, Dr.P.H., CSB epidemiologist, participated in the 2nd Cherokee Nation Cancer Summit, held March 6–7 in Tulsa, OK. He discussed “A National Perspective on Cancer Rates and Trends: Focus on American Indians and Alaska Natives.” “Overall cancer incidence rates for AI/AN populations are lower than for non-Hispanic whites,” stated Dr. Miller. “However, among the top 10 cancers, incidence rates among AI/AN populations were higher for stomach, liver, kidney, and cervix uteri.”



Barry Miller Speaks at the 2nd Cherokee Nation Cancer Summit

Open to anyone interested in decreasing mortality rates and increasing quality of life for those diagnosed with cancer in the Cherokee Nation, the summit sought to “foster a cancer control community that will work together to reduce cancer mortality, enhance effectiveness of diagnosis and treatment tools, and motivate, empower, and educate tribal citizens.”

CSB Staff Participates in NCRA Meeting



CSB staff members attended and contributed to the National Cancer Registrars Association’s (NCRA) 34th Annual Conference, April 28–May 1

in Minneapolis, MN. The program included a post-conference workshop sponsored by NCI’s SEER Program on data collection related to leukemias, lymphomas, and head and neck cancers.



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SEER Quality Improvement Team (L to R): Peggy Adamo, Jennifer Ruhl, Carol Johnson, Antoinette Percy-Laurry, Lois Dickie, and Carol Kosary.

applying correct coding rules, collaborative staging elements, site-specific factors, and treatment codes; and correctly coding histologies for these cases.”

“The workshop was well-received,” recalled Antoinette Percy-Laurry, M.S.P.H., CSB public health analyst. “We had more than 150 participants. The workshop involved discussions on making correct multiple primary decisions related to leukemias, lymphomas, and head and neck cancers;

In addition to the workshop, SEER contributed to NCRA’s basket raffle, in which registry states and other organizations provide a basket of donated items to help raise funds to support NCRA activities. “For the last several years, SEER has been proud to contribute a basket with donations pooled together from, if not all, most of our registries,” stated Peggy Adamo, R.H.I.T., C.T.R., CSB public health analyst.

NCRA’s 35th Annual Educational Conference will be held May 30–June 2, 2009, in New Orleans, LA.



SEER Donations to NCRA

ENAR/IBS Meeting Recap



Mary Sara McPeek

Statistical Research and Applications Branch (SRAB) staff members attended the 2008 spring meeting of the Eastern North American Region (ENAR), a subdivision of the International Biometric Society (IBS), March 16–19 in Arlington, VA. The meeting included eight Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS) sessions. “The organizers of all IMS sessions,” reported Ram Tiwari, Ph.D., IMS program chair and former SRAB mathematical statistician, are “active NCI grantees. Each of the sessions supported NCI’s research missions while covering a broad range of biostatistical methods with biomedical applications.”

The meeting also included the IMS Medallion Lecture, delivered by Professor Mary Sara McPeek, University of Chicago. “Dr. McPeek’s lecture focused on genetic risk factors that predispose some people to a particular disease,” said Dr. Tiwari. “She explained that technological advances have made it feasible to perform case-control association studies on a genome-wide basis.”

Aimed at developing and applying statistical and mathematical theory and methods to advance the biological sciences (such as agriculture, biomedical science and public health, ecology, environmental sciences, forestry, and allied disciplines), IBS is organized into several geographic divisions and smaller national groups. Its ENAR subdivision includes eastern parts of both the United States and Canada. Further information about IBS and ENAR can be found at tibs.org and enar.org.

Employment Opportunities

NCI is inviting applications for several positions within SRP, DCCPS. U.S. citizenship or permanent residency is required for Federal positions. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and NIH are equal opportunity employers. For each position, send a letter summarizing your experience and interests and a complete CV, including the names of three references, by electronic mail to the listed contact.

Senior Mathematical Statistician/Program Director

NCI welcomes applications for a mathematical statistician to serve as Program Director for the largest statistical methods grants portfolio at NIH, which currently consists of more than 60 grants and approximately \$12 million dollars per year in funding commitments (<http://statfund.cancer.gov>). This senior statistician will interact with current grantees and university statisticians to stimulate new, cutting-edge statistical research in areas of interest to NCI. The position is within the Statistical Research and Applications Branch (SRAB).

Requirements: A doctoral level training and at least 5 years of broad experience in statistics. Knowledge and experience with the grants process is desirable, as well as an interest in statistical issues relevant to SRAB's mission.

Contact: Eric J. (Rocky) Feuer, Ph.D., Chief, Statistical Research and Applications Branch, rf41u@nih.gov

Position in Spatial Statistics

SRP has an active program of research in the statistical analysis of spatial and temporal patterns of cancer, spatial data visualization, and GIS (gis.cancer.gov). Opportunities exist for collaboration and leadership in the areas of spatial statistics and geographically related analysis throughout NCI and with other NIH Institutes, other Federal agencies, and the extramural research community.

Requirements: A Ph.D. in biostatistics or a related field and experience in spatial statistical methods applications and research, with an emphasis on model-based methods. Experience in one or more of the following areas also is desirable: disease-rate mapping, geovisualization, GIS, and cancer registry data analysis.

Contact: Eric J. (Rocky) Feuer, Ph.D., Chief, Statistical Research and Applications Branch, rf41u@nih.gov

Positions in Mathematical Statistics and Biostatistics

NCI has several positions available within the SEER Program. Each position includes responsibility for initiating and managing collaborative analyses with scientists from NCI and other Institutes, agencies, and academic centers. Current openings include Senior Mathematical Statistician (minimum 4 years of postdoctoral experience) and Biostatistician (minimum 2 years of postdoctoral experience). Positions also are available for experienced statisticians with a master's degree.

Contact: Judith Swan, M.H.S., Surveillance Research Program, js60y@nih.gov

Quantitative Epidemiologist/Social Scientist

SRP invites applications for a quantitative epidemiologist/social scientist with a focus on social correlates of cancer. The position focuses on utilization of novel measures of health disparities, examination of individual versus ecologic measures of socioeconomic status, and/or geospatial analysis.

Requirements: A graduate degree and several years of experience related to statistics and health disparities.

Contact: Judith Swan, M.H.S., Surveillance Research Program, js60y@nih.gov

Statistician in Population Genetics

SRP invites applications for a statistician with expertise in population genetics. SRP is expanding its program in the area of statistical genetics, including genome-wide association studies and the examination of gene-environment interactions. The position focuses on methodologic research and statistical genetics to address methodologic questions in cancer epidemiology.

Requirements: A doctoral degree in biostatistics or statistics and several years of postdoctoral experience related to developing methods in population genetics.

Contact: Eric J. (Rocky) Feuer, Ph.D., Chief, Statistical Research and Applications Branch, rf41u@nih.gov

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Postdoctoral and Sabbatical Positions

SRP invites applications from qualified candidates in the area of cancer surveillance research. The positions range from summer-only to 1-year appointments. Successful candidates will come into contact with scientists and public health professionals representing a variety of research disciplines. Mechanisms include the Cancer Research

Training Award (CRTA) and the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) sabbatical position.

Contact: Eric J. (Rocky) Feuer, Ph.D., Chief, Statistical Research and Applications Branch, rf41u@nih.gov

For further information on all positions, see:

surveillance.cancer.gov/jobs

seer.cancer.gov

srab.cancer.gov

Training and Meeting Opportunities



SEER*Stat 101 at 2008 APHA Annual Meeting



NCI's SEER Program will sponsor a full-day SEER*Stat course during the American Public Health Association's (APHA) 136th Annual Meeting and Expo, October 25–29, 2008, in San Diego, CA. The course, entitled "SEER*Stat: A Software Tool for Investigating Population-Based Cancer Statistics," will be held on October 25; the cost is \$270. Participants will learn to use SEER*Stat software to analyze cancer surveillance data through hands-on activities. At the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Use SEER*Stat to calculate disease incidence and mortality rates, view database values, and export results.
- Define an analysis cohort based on cancer site, geographic location, or other variables.
- Stratify statistical results by cancer site, geographic location, or other variables.
- Analyze cancer registry data using frequencies, rates, and survival data as they are used within SEER*Stat.

- Analyze cancer registry data using SEER*Stat.

For further information on this course, contact Carol Kosary, M.A., at kosaryc@mail.nih.gov or visit the APHA Learning Institute Courses site at apha.org/programs/education/APHA-Learning+Institute.htm.

Additional cancer registrar training resources can be found at seer.cancer.gov/training.

Principles of Oncology Training Program in Cancer Registry Operations and Procedures

A Fritz and Associates, LLC
Preparing Cancer Registry Professionals for the Future

A. Fritz and Associates will conduct a 5-day training program in cancer registry operations and procedures entitled "Principles of Oncology," December 8–12, 2008, in Reno, NV. The course is endorsed by the NCRA and North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR) and recommended by NCI's SEER Program. The registration fee is \$949. For more information, including registration procedures and a daily class schedule, visit afritz.org/pocr.htm.

Funding Opportunities

Program Announcement: Decision Making in Cancer

The Program Announcement (PA) Decision Making in Cancer: Single-Event Decisions (R01, R21) invites applications for research projects that will enhance understanding of human

decisionmaking processes so that individuals can make more informed and satisfying choices regarding their health.

Further details can be found at:

PA-08-063 (R01): grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-08-063.html

PA-08-064 (R21): grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-08-064.html

SRP Staff News

Oluyemisi Akinneye Named DEAS Task Leader



Oluyemisi Akinneye

In March 2008, Oluyemisi Akinneye was named the new Division of Extramural Activities Support (DEAS) task leader for SRP. Among her responsibilities as task leader, she will oversee and ensure balance in the workload, serve as liaison between DEAS staff and Institute/Center (IC) customers, and relate to management IC customer needs. Mrs. Akinneye first came to NIH in September 2004, working at the Center for Scientific Review and then at the National Eye Institute from November 2004 to July 2007. Most recently, she was a grants technical assistant for the NCI Office of Grants Administration, Office of the Director. After attending the University of Maryland at College Park and the University of Baltimore, Mrs. Akinneye received her B.S. degree in information systems with a minor in sociology. She also has pursued graduate studies for an M.B.A./M.S. in financial management at the University of Maryland, University College. Outside of NIH/NCI, Mrs. Akinneye enjoys event planning.

New Hires at SRP

Danny Lin



Danny Lin

Danny Lin joined the Cancer Statistics Branch (CSB) in June 2008 as a 6-month Cancer Research Training Award (CRTA) fellow. She currently is in her fourth year of medical school at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. Ms. Lin is no stranger to CSB. Since 2004, she has spent most of her school vacations working at SRP; she assisted in developing and editing the *SEER Survival Monograph: Cancer Survival Among Adults: U.S. SEER Program, 1988-2001*, literature research, and updating multiple primary and histology coding rules. During her current fellowship, Ms. Lin is involved in various SEER projects, including helping to update the *Collaborative Staging Manual and Coding Instructions*. In her spare time, Ms. Lin enjoys reading and creative writing, singing in a choir, and playing the piano.

Megan Murphy



Megan Murphy

Megan Murphy, B.S., joined CSB in June 2008 as a summer CRTA fellow. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from McGill University, Montreal, Canada, Ms. Murphy moved to Maryland, where she worked in the private biotechnology industry for 3 years. This work involved optimizing and supporting manufacturing processes. Her major projects, which included the purification of Ovarex, a monoclonal antibody to treat ovarian cancer undergoing phase III clinical trials, helped support research and process development. At SRP, Ms. Murphy is involved in the analysis of the SEER limited use database focusing on esophageal cancer, delay adjustment analyses for cancer incidence rates, and analyses of survival at various cancer sites. She currently is pursuing a master's degree in biostatistics at Columbia University, New York, and plans to graduate in 2009. Ms. Murphy also maintains an active lifestyle by running and practicing yoga and Pilates and has artistic interests, including visiting museums, drawing, and painting.

Julia Soulakova



Julia Soulakova

Julia Soulakova, Ph.D., joined the Statistical Research and Applications Branch (SRAB) in June 2008 as a summer CRTA fellow. Dr. Soulakova earned her doctorate in statistics from the University of Pittsburgh in 2006 and bachelor's degree in applied mathematics from Moscow State University. During her fellowship, she is working with Bill Davis, Ph.D., and Anne Hartman, M.S., M.A., on the analysis of the Tobacco Use Supplement to the Current Population Survey (TUS-CPS) and the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Dr. Soulakova is an adjunct faculty consultant for the Survey, Statistics, and Psychometric Core Research Facility and an Assistant Professor of Statistics, and is involved in evaluating behavioral medicine longitudinal studies and developing statistical methodology to analyze combination drug efficacy studies. Previously, as a graduate student at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, she participated in the design and data analysis of NIH-funded

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longitudinal research studies of obesity, smoking cessation, and drug trials. Her research interests include multiple drug testing, survey methods, and survival analysis. In her spare time, Dr. Souhlakova enjoys being with her husband, their 12-year-old daughter, and 2-year-old son.

Carol Johnson Elected to NCRA Council on Certification



Carol Johnson

In March 2008, Carol Johnson, B.S., C.T.R., was elected to the Council on Certification for the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA). The Council on Certification oversees the certification examination required to become a C.T.R.

Born and raised in North Dakota, Ms. Johnson earned a B.S. in computer science with a minor in mathematics from Minot State University, Minot, ND. As a public health analyst for SRP and manager of the NCI SEER Quality Improvement team, Ms. Johnson has more than 40 years of experience in audits, cancer registries, and management. She also served as a past president of NCRA, a member of the Board of Directors and Finance committee, and chair of the Advisory Committee.

Megan Othus Receives 2008 JSM Student Award



Megan Othus

Megan Othus, a doctoral student in the Department of Biostatistics, Harvard University, received a Health Policy Statistics Section student award for her paper, "A Class of Semiparametric Mixture Cure Survival Models With Dependent Censoring," at the 2008 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) in Denver, CO. Ms. Othus coauthored this paper with Yi

Li, Ph.D., her thesis advisor, and Ram Tiwari, Ph.D., formerly of SRAB.

Her work with Dr. Li on the development of statistical methodologies for the analysis of data with complex censoring mechanisms was motivated by and is applicable to population-based cancer studies, as well as various issues in racial disparities in cancer cures, a new and promising field. Part

of her thesis also won a 2008 Eastern North American Region (ENAR) student award. Dr. Li stated, "It has been a great experience to be working with Megan as she is such a highly motivated and organized student and researcher."

Ram Tiwari Moves to FDA



Ram Tiwari

In April 2008, Ram Tiwari, Ph.D., a mathematical statistician in SRAB since 2000, moved to a new position as Associate Director of Statistical Science and Policy in the Office of Biostatistics, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). With his extensive experience in academia and administration, he will be working on FDA guidance documents, reviewing policy, mentoring colleagues, and providing statistical support.

At SRP, Dr. Tiwari oversaw and led the management and administration of the SRP statistical methods grants portfolio, served as liaison between DCCPS/SRP and the extramural research community, and developed statistical models to analyze cancer data. He received an NIH Merit Award in 2006 for his exceptional work with the statistical grants portfolio.

At SRP, Dr. Tiwari oversaw and led the management and administration of the SRP statistical methods grants portfolio, served as liaison between DCCPS/SRP and the extramural research community, and developed statistical models to analyze cancer data. He received an NIH Merit Award in 2006 for his exceptional work with the statistical grants portfolio.

"It has been a pleasure to work with SRAB/SRP and my colleagues in DCCPS for the last 8 years," stated Dr. Tiwari. "Even though I am leaving NCI, I plan to continue interacting with statisticians at SRP/DCCPS, as well as in FDA and the larger NIH community."

Lois Dickie Receives Performance Award



Lois A. Dickie

Lois A. Dickie, C.T.R., received a Distinguished Performance Award for her work at NIH. The award was presented through Kelly Services, Inc., a Fortune 500 company that provides staffing solutions. Ms. Dickie is a public health analyst-contractor through Kelly Services and has been with SRP since February 2007.

"This was an unexpected surprise, and I thank SEER staff for all of their support," Ms. Dickie said.

Recent SRP Publications

Das B, Clegg LX, Feuer EJ, Pickle LW. A new method to evaluate the completeness of case ascertainment by a cancer registry. *Cancer Causes Control* 2008 Jun;19(5):515-25. Epub 2008 Feb 13.

Etzioni R, Tsodikov A, Mariotto A, Szabo A, Falcon S, Wegelin J, Ditommaso D, Karnaofski K, Gulati R, Penson DE, Feuer EJ. Quantifying the role of PSA screening in the U.S. prostate cancer mortality decline. *Cancer Causes Control* 2008 Mar;19(2):175-81.

Harper S, Lynch J, Meersman SC, Breen N, Davis WW, Reichman ME. An overview of methods for monitoring social disparities in cancer with an example using trends in lung cancer incidence by area-socioeconomic position and race-ethnicity, 1992-2004. *Am J Epidemiol* 2008 Apr 15;167(8):889-99. Epub 2008 Mar 15.

Huang L, Chen M, Anderson G. Bayesian analysis of the mixed models for repeated binary response and time-dependent missing covariates. *J Agric Biol Environ Stat* (in press).

Huang L, Cronin KA, Johnson KA, Mariotto AB, Feuer EJ. Improved survival time: what can survival cure models tell us about population-based survival improvement in late stage colorectal, ovarian, and testicular cancer? *Cancer* 2008 May;112(10):2289-300.

Percy-Laurry AL, Johnson CH, Reichman ME, Adamo M, Lewis DR, Peace S. Revising the Multiple Primary and Histology Coding Rules. *J Regist Manage* 2007;34(3):81-6.

Rollison DE, Howlader N, Smith MT, Strom SS, Merritt WD, Ries LA, Edwards BK, List AF. Epidemiology of myelodysplastic syndromes and chronic myeloproliferative disorders in the United States, 2001-2004: using data from the NAACCR and SEER programs. *Blood* 2008 Jul;112(1):45-52. Epub 2008 Apr 28.

Schenck AP, Klabunde CN, Warren JL, Peacock S, Davis WW, Hawley ST, Pignone M, Ransohoff DF. Evaluation of claims, medical records and self-report for measuring fecal occult blood testing among Medicare enrollees in fee for service. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 2008 Apr;17(4):799-804. Epub 2008 Apr 1.

SEER Registry News



2008 SEER Managers and PI Meeting

The 2008 SEER Program Managers and Principal Investigators (PI) Meeting will be held November 12-14, 2008, at the Bolger Center, Potomac, MD. Individuals from NCI's DCCPS and SEER's 18 cancer registries are invited to discuss issues in cancer surveillance. For more information, contact Betsy Flagg at eflagg@mail.nih.gov.

Updates to the Multiple Primary and Histology Coding Rules Manual

In May 2008, the following revisions were made to the Multiple Primary and Histology (MP/H) Coding Rules Manual:

- Benign brain/CNS rules were incorporated into the main Manual.
- Sections that are more accessible to individuals who use screen readers were updated.
- Replacement pages released on January 8 and February 8, 2008, were incorporated.

The MP/H Rules Manual is available in PDF format and may be downloaded as a single file or by section. A hard copy of the manual is available for purchase from the NCRA Web site: ncra-usa.org/store/index.htm#pubs8.

To download and for more details, visit seer.cancer.gov/tools/mphrules/download.html.



SEER Registry Staff News

Overcoming Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

In 2005, the Louisiana Tumor Registry (LTR) faced a devastating setback when not one but two hurricanes struck the north-central Gulf Coast. The destructive effects of the hurricanes did not dampen LTR's persistent and dedicated efforts to continue registry operations and ensure high-quality data, however. In fact, these efforts were evident even before the hurricanes hit, when LTR backed up its master data file with the help of Rocky Mountain Cancer Data Systems (RMCDS).

"We owe much to Larry Derrick and the RMCDS staff," stated Vivien Chen, Ph.D., Director and Principal Investigator, LTR. "Anticipating the potential loss of connectivity, they duplicated and placed LTR's master data file on a designated server at Utah University. This allowed us to continue to perform registry operational tasks despite not being able to access LTR's database at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC)."

In the aftermath of the hurricanes, LTR witnessed many New Orleans metropolitan area hospitals facing financial losses, hospital employees being laid off, the dispersion and relocation of health professionals and patients, the loss of several LTR employees, hospital and outpatient clinic closures, and damaged and inaccessible medical records. Aside from the challenges of relocating the central registry office and accessing the data and coordinating registry operations remotely, the above events complicated the timely abstraction and processing of cancer cases and tracking of cancer patients. To continue to submit high-quality data, LTR had to respond in unique ways.

"The Katrina experience required us to be very creative to obtain complete case-ascertainment, ensure high-quality data, and meet timely submission. We never anticipated how severe the impact of hurricanes could be, but we never gave up. We felt we did our best to overcome these challenges and are proud that we managed to submit our data to SEER on schedule. In 2007, we were awarded "First Place," along with three very well-established SEER registries, for meeting our goals in ensuring data quality," continued Dr. Chen.

"LTR has always done well in meeting its goals, but in light of the obstacles the registry had to overcome post-Katrina, this was especially remarkable," added CSB public health analyst Peggy Adamo, R.H.I.T., C.T.R.

LTR met its overwhelming challenges head-on. Just 1 month post-Katrina, the registry resumed operations at the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center in Baton Rouge; it returned to New Orleans quickly, in early 2006. To accommodate scattered registry staff, weekly conference calls were held to continue work, monitor progress, and address issues that arose. Because of the shortage of registry staff at both area hospitals and LTR, contractors were hired to screen and abstract backlogged cases.

"We learned a great deal from this experience," stated Xiao Cheng Wu, M.D., M.P.H., Assistant Director, LTR. "Although we continue to face challenges such as determining population estimates, Katrina revealed another crucial aspect that we are now more aware of and need to examine—how disaster impacts cancer care."

"We sincerely thank NCI, SRP, NAACCR, central registries throughout the nation, and local hospitals for their support, as well as our very dedicated staff who sometimes traveled more than 2 hours to screen and abstract cases," stated Drs. Chen and Wu. "It was difficult for LTR to regroup, but slowly and surely we did, and we hope to continue to move forward and excel."



Louisiana Tumor Registry Staff

Jean Pirkey Remembered



Jean Pirkey

Jean Pirkey, a C.T.R. at the Connecticut Tumor Registry, died of lung cancer in February 2008, at age 56. She is survived by her husband Gary, two sisters, and two brothers. Ms. Pirkey joined the Connecticut registry in 1986. She was promoted only 3 months after being hired and became an invaluable resource for both new and

experienced registrars.

“Jean was a familiar fixture in the registry community,” fellow C.T.R. Cathryn Phillips recalled. “I began working with her in the early- to mid-1990s. Jean was always receptive to our questions and never made any of us feel foolish for asking. She helped us understand the intricacies of the registry field, the difference between central and hospital registries, and the importance of working with NCI.”

Ms. Pirkey was heavily involved in quality improvement activities, such as training registrars, ensuring data quality, and contributing to and editing SEER Program staging and

coding manuals for more than two decades. Additionally, she coordinated the operational workflow of Patterns of Care (POC) studies and was a former vice president of the Tumor Registrars Association of Connecticut and a member of the SEER Hematopoietic Workgroup.

“I had the pleasure of getting to know Jean through various SEER activities, through NCRA annual meetings, and SEER workshops. She will be greatly missed,” stated CSB public health analyst Peggy Adamo, R.H.I.T., C.T.R.

Registry Staff Members Receive Certification

SRP congratulates the following staff members from the Metropolitan Atlanta and Rural Georgia SEER registries for their achievements:

Kevin C. Ward, M.P.H., Ph.D., C.T.R., completed his Ph.D. degree using SEER data as the basis for his dissertation research. He also successfully passed the C.T.R. examination. Dr. Ward is deputy director of the Georgia Center for Cancer Statistics (GCCS), Atlanta, GA.

Lyn Almon, M.S.P.H., GCCS data analyst, passed the C.T.R. examination, helping to bring the total number of C.T.R.s in the registry to 15.

SEER Registry Staff Profile



Vivien W. Chen, Ph.D., M.P.H., Louisiana Tumor Registry

Vivien W. Chen, Ph.D., M.P.H., is Director and Principal Investigator (PI) of the Louisiana Tumor Registry (LTR) at the School of Public Health, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC), New Orleans.

Dr. Chen initially worked with cancer registry data as a research associate at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (OUHSC), where she also completed her doctoral dissertation on a case-control study on breast cancer. On



Vivien W. Chen

earning her doctorate, she immediately was appointed Assistant Director of the then newly established OUHSC Central Tumor Registry. “It was the first time I was exposed to the registry field and NCI’s SEER Program as I oversaw data collection, ensured quality, and prepared the annual report. I never thought it would be my career, but I am glad it turned out that way,” stated Dr. Chen.

When Dr. Chen attended her first International Association of Cancer Registries (IACR) meeting and met Dr. Calum Muir, the conference keynote speaker and IACR founder, she saw the potential of the SEER Program and the role of cancer surveillance. “Cancer surveillance is a key activity across the entire cancer control continuum. With the information provided by [cancer] registries such as those in the SEER Program, we can generate hypotheses that serve as the basis for cancer research. Moreover, registry data can be

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used to evaluate stage shifts resulting from effective cancer screening programs, tell us whether or not a patient's cancer is properly diagnosed, and ensure quality cancer care."

Following her experience at OUHSC, Dr. Chen's growing interest in the cancer registry field eventually led her to LTR and LSUHSC, where she currently serves in the triple roles of registry director, epidemiology program director, and professor of epidemiology. Her many responsibilities include ensuring that LTR meets funding agencies' requirements, producing timely and high-quality data, mentoring and training junior faculty and students, and developing the epidemiology program.

As PI, Dr. Chen has strong interests in female cancers, cancer in minority populations, cancer registration, cancer prognostic factors, access to care, and patterns of cancer care. Among her current projects are the Breast and Prostate Cancer Data Quality and Patterns of Care study, involving review of medical records to evaluate treatment received and therapy guideline compliance, and a feasibility study in collaboration with NCI's SEER Program to assess medical care provided to cancer patients in the adolescent and young adult group.

An active figure in the registry field for nearly three decades, Dr. Chen has held numerous appointed positions in organizations including the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, World Health Organization (WHO), NAACCR, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), IACR, and

NCI. Not surprisingly, she received NAACCR's prestigious Calum S. Muir Memorial Award in 2005. "My experience has been very rewarding and enlightening. I have seen cancer surveillance applied to every aspect of cancer control. I want to continue providing complete, high-quality, and clinically relevant data and advancing clinical and translational research opportunities for the registry."

Selected Publications From Dr. Chen:

Wu XC, Richardson LC, Kahn AR, Fulton JP, Cress RD, Shen T, Wolf HJ, Bolick-Aldrich S, Chen VW. Survival difference between non-Hispanic black and non-Hispanic white women with localized breast cancer: the impact of guideline-concordant therapy. *J Natl Med Assoc* 2008 May;100(5):490-8.

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Recent SEER Publications



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of non-small cell lung cancer among women. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 2008 Jan;17(1):148-57. Epub 2008 Jan 9.

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To search previous SEER publications, visit seer.cancer.gov/pubsearch.



CISNET News

Colorectal Cancer Mortality Projections—An Interactive Web Site

cisnet.cancer.gov/projections/colorectal

Launched in December 2007, this Web site provides a modeling tool that projects future trends in colorectal cancer (CRC) mortality and evaluates how policy options—proposals to increase cancer prevention, cancer screening, and access to state-of-the-science cancer treatment—may affect future mortality trends. It is intended for policy, legislative, and cancer control planning staff at the Federal, state, and local levels, as well as advocacy and professional groups. Using this site, individuals can generate interactive graphs projecting CRC mortality, review Healthy People 2010 goals relevant to CRC, and quickly answer important policy and program planning questions regarding reducing mortality from CRC.

CISNET Webinars

NCI's Office of Advocacy Relations and CISNET will host a series of seminars on the CISNET simulation models,

which can be used to support the establishment of policies, guidelines, and evidence-based cancer control planning to decrease cancer deaths through screening, treatment, and risk factor modification. No registration is required to participate, and recordings and transcripts of the seminars will be available.

Visit cisnet.cancer.gov/webinars for further information on previous and future Webinars.

Statfund Web Site

statfund.cancer.gov

The Statfund Web site provides information on statistical grants currently funded within DCCPS, as well as funding opportunities and application procedures. Established for the extramural statistical research community, the site contains information about funding mechanisms and opportunities available through NIH.

Contact: Eric J. (Rocky) Feuer, Ph.D., Chief, Statistical Research and Applications Branch, rf41u@nih.gov.



CISNET Staff Profile

Suresh H. Moolgavkar, M.D., Ph.D.,
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

Suresh H. Moolgavkar, M.D., Ph.D., is a full member at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (FHCRC) and a Principal Investigator (PI) for the CISNET lung group.

Dr. Moolgavkar's research expertise includes cancer epidemiology and quantitative methodology. These interests led to his



Suresh H. Moolgavkar

involvement with CISNET, for which he has been a grantee for more than 5 years. His primary research with CISNET focused on lung cancer. "I have been interested in lung cancer for a long time," Dr. Moolgavkar stated. "I am especially interested in mechanisms of carcinogenesis and the effects of external factors, such as our smoking habits, on underlying biological processes."

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Dr. Moolgavkar and his team studied the relationship between trends in lung cancer incidence to trends in smoking habits in the United States. This involved developing mathematical and statistical models that describe lung cancer risk in the U.S. population and acknowledge the multistage nature of carcinogenesis. Currently, Dr. Moolgavkar and colleagues are working to determine the effects of changes in smoking behavior on lung cancer rates.

Recognizing the value of cancer registry data, Dr. Moolgavkar and his team also use NCI's SEER database to investigate lung cancer incidence trends. Using biologically based models, the incidence data collected from SEER can be analyzed to gain insight into the underlying mechanisms of carcinogenesis and temporal trends and allows for detailed analyses by race, sex, and histologic type. Moreover, by incorporating tobacco consumption trends into the parameters of a multistage model, these investigations can help "relate trends in lung cancer incidence to trends in smoking habits in the United States."

In addition to CISNET and FHCRC, Dr. Moolgavkar has extensive experience in academia as a Professor of Epidemiology and Adjunct Professor of Biostatistics and Applied Mathematics at the University of Washington and has served on the faculties of The Johns Hopkins University, Indiana University, University of Pennsylvania, and Fox Chase Cancer Center. In the international arena, Dr. Moolgavkar has been a visiting scientist at the Radiation Effects Research Foundation in Hiroshima, Japan, the International Agency for Research on Cancer in Lyon, France, and the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg, Germany.

Dr. Moolgavkar's dedication to the fields of epidemiology, biostatistics, and quantitative risk assessment has earned him several prestigious awards, including the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Society for Risk Analysis in 2001

and the Founders' Award from the CIIT Centers for Health Research in 1990. He also has authored and coauthored more than 150 papers, served as the editor of several books and a monograph, and made numerous invited presentations.

Being a part of CISNET has been a positive experience for Dr. Moolgavkar. "CISNET has given me the opportunity to interact and exchange ideas with other lung cancer modeling groups. This has encouraged a stimulating learning environment which I hope to continue to be a part of," he stated.

Selected Publications From Dr. Moolgavkar:

Luebeck EG, Moolgavkar SH, Liu A, Ulrich N. Does folic acid supplementation prevent or promote colon cancer? Results from model-based predictions. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*, In Press.

Meza R, Hazelton WD, Colditz GA, Moolgavkar SH. Analysis of lung cancer incidence in the nurses' health and the health professionals' follow-up studies using a multistage carcinogenesis model. *Cancer Causes and Control* 2007 (Epub ahead of print).

Jeon J, Meza R, Moolgavkar SH, Luebeck EG. The evaluation of cancer screening strategies using multistage carcinogenesis models, *Math Biosciences*, In Press.

Clements MS, Armstrong BK, Moolgavkar SH. Lung cancer rate predictions using generalized additive models. *Biostatistics* 2005 Oct;6(4):576-89. Epub 2005 Apr 28.

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Recent CISNET Publications

Breast Working Group

Stout NK, Goldie SJ. Keeping the noise down: common random numbers for disease simulation modeling. *Health Care Manag Sci* Epub ahead of print 2008 Apr 11.

Tosteson AN, Stout NK, Fryback DG, Acharyya S, Herman B, Hannah H, Pisano ED, DMIST Investigators. Cost-effectiveness of digital mammography breast cancer screening. *Ann Intern Med* 2008 Jan;148(1):1-10.

Colorectal Working Group

Jeon J, Meza R, Moolgavkar SH, Luebeck EG. Evaluation of screening strategies for pre-malignant lesions using a biomathematical approach. *Math Biosci* 2008 May;213(1):56-70. Epub 2008 Feb 26.

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For a complete listing of CISNET publications, see cisnet.cancer.gov/publications.

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