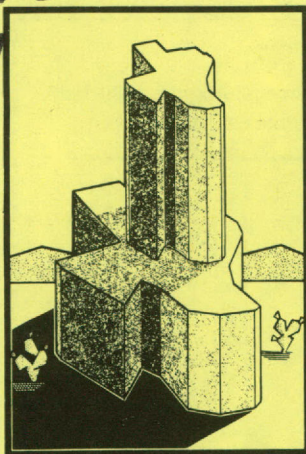


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Vol.6, No. 1  
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# Texas Cancer Reporting News

Cancer Registry Division 1100 West 49th Street Austin, Texas 78756  
(512) 458-7265 1-800-252-8059

Ruth F. Stewart, R.N.C.  
Chair, Texas Board of Health  
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Commissioner of Health

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## From the Director

The last few months have been very busy times for the Texas Cancer Registry (TCR). To just name a few of the activities, we have revised the reportable data items and reporting form, changed our data coding scheme and format, modified and distributed the cancer reporting handbook, trained hospital staff to meet the new reporting requirements, nearly completed the conversion of our mainframe cancer database system to a pc-based system "SANDCRAB", hired new staff, held focus group discussions across the state and published several new cancer reports. One major focus has been on establishing the two new regional cancer registries, in Arlington and Houston. The Arlington Registry will be staffed with six persons located in the Texas Department of Health (TDH) regional office and will be responsible for ensuring complete, accurate and timely reporting from Public Health Regions (PHRs) 2, 3 and 4. The Houston Registry will have five staff, also housed in the TDH regional office, and will oversee reporting from PHRs 5 and 6. We will notify you when the regional registries are staffed so that all questions can be directed to your area's respective regional staff. These staff also will be conducting cancer reporting training sessions in their respective regions. We will notify you when and where such training will be held.

Nancy Weiss, MPH, PhD

## Annual Cancer Conference



The Texas Cancer Registry is once again planning a 2 day conference to be held in either late July or early August in Austin. Presentations will include topics directed to cancer incidence reporters as well as continuing education topics of interest to Tumor Registrars. We will keep you posted as details are finalized.



Focus group discussions have been held across the state to help formulate new rules and procedures for the Texas Cancer Registry. These focus group discussions with tumor registrars and other cancer reporting institutions were designed to obtain input on how to achieve timely reporting, to determine a reporting timeframe of cancer cases from previous years, and to define reporting compliance. Other items discussed included the reportable cancer list, revisions to the handbook, regional offices, quality assurance activities and the formation of community advisory/steering committees. Focus groups were held in El Paso in January, in Austin in February and in Dallas, Tyler, Harlingen, Houston, Odessa and San Antonio in March. Participants voiced a desire to have such focus group discussions continue in the future on a quarterly basis.

## MEET THE STAFF

In this issue we would like you to meet Ms. Deidre Davis, CTR. She joined the central office staff in December 1994 as the Quality Control and Training coordinator. She also serves as the Program Manager for PHR 7. Deidre comes to us with eleven years of experience, the last four of which were in the American College of Surgeons Cancer Program at Medical Center Hospital in Odessa. Previously she has worked in the medical records department and the hospital quality assurance department. Deidre is a member of the National Cancer Registrars Association and currently serves as the secretary of the Texas Tumor Registrars Association. As a volunteer for the American Cancer Society Ector Unit, she was a member of the Breast Health Task Force and chair of several income development events such as a Duck Race and a Las Vegas Night. Deidre grew up in Odessa, has a seven-year-old son, Mitchell, and enjoys reading. We feel very fortunate to have Deidre on staff and hope that you will join us in welcoming her if you get the opportunity.



# Data Uses

During recent months, the Texas Cancer Registry has continued to produce reports utilizing our regional cancer incidence and state-wide cancer mortality data. Two recently published reports now available to interested parties include our 1993 monograph on Texas Cancer Mortality, and our report on cancer incidence and mortality in the Texas Golden Crescent. The Statbite this month is from our report on cancer incidence and mortality in the Texas Golden Crescent.

Cluster investigations have been continuing, and this month the cluster investigation report is a review of all cancer cluster investigations in 1994. This report reviews the kinds of requests received, the cancer sites investigated, and the significance of the findings from these investigations.

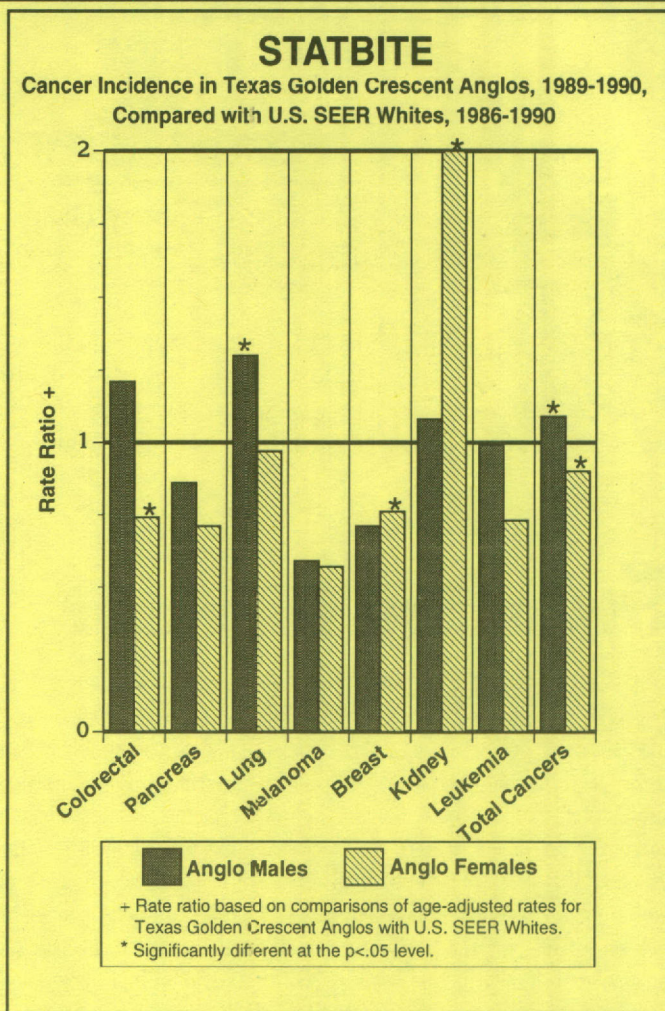


## 1994 CANCER CLUSTER SUMMARY

The number of inquiries from concerned citizens, reporters, health professionals, legislators, and activist groups regarding excess cancer has been steadily increasing since 1986. From 1986 through 1994, the Texas Cancer Registry completed 284 investigations of possible cancer clusters. Between 1986 and 1989, 76 investigations were completed, an average of 19 per year. From 1990 to 1993, 146 investigations were completed, an average of 36.5 investigations per year. In 1994, the Registry completed 62 cancer cluster investigations. Most inquiries involve a perceived excess of cancer in some geographic area such as a county, city, or zip code area.

Of the 62 investigations completed in 1994, 46 (74%) were performed at the city level. Seventy-four percent (46) of the investigations were requested by the general public. The greatest percentage of the investigations, 68% (42), were requested by females. Most inquiries were concerned about cancer incidence, but since cancer incidence reporting is not complete for many areas of the state, 65% (40) of the investigations were limited to evaluating cancer mortality data.

The Texas Cancer Registry evaluated a total of 545 cancer sites in the 62 investigations. Of the total cancer sites evaluated, 45 (8%) of these sites



were statistically significant at the p<.05 level. Twenty-nine sites (5%) were significantly elevated, and 16 sites (3%) were significantly lower than expected.

Of the 545 cancer sites evaluated, the most common were leukemia (14%), lung (14%), colon (9%), breast (8%), brain (7%), pancreas (6%), prostate (6%), non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (6%), bladder (4%), and stomach (4%).

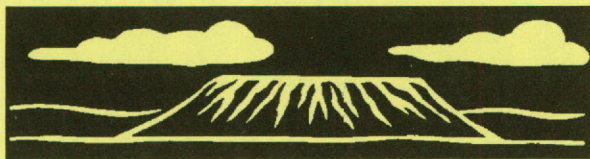
Five of the 62 investigations included concerns about possible environmental hazards. To determine if environmental hazards did exist, environmental surveys were performed by the Health Studies Program of the Bureau of Epidemiology. These surveys found no evidence of any environmental contamination.

The average response time for completing a cancer cluster investigation in 1994 was 3.9 days.

Barry Wilson, Cluster Investigations  
Epidemiology Section



## News from the Regions—



### GREETINGS FROM LUBBOCK— PUBLIC HEALTH REGIONS 1, 9 AND 10

The Lubbock office located in PHR I welcomes the hospitals in PHR 10. At 1109 Kemper in Lubbock, this office now receives reporting forms from hospitals in PHRs 1, 9 and 10. Patricia Ploegsma, RRA is the new TCR Program Manager in the Lubbock office. She replaces Tricia Vowels who has relocated to the Austin office of the TCR as the Quality Assurance and Special Projects Program Manager. "Pat" brings a great deal of education and experience to the Registry in Lubbock. Questions regarding technical assistance and training in these regions should be directed to Pat or Shelly at (806) 744-3577.

Tricia Vowels, CTR



### "SALUDOS" DE SAN ANTONIO

The first training program for the regional hospitals was held in January 1995. It was a pilot program and we received many good evaluations and worthy comments. These will enable us to enhance the quality of our training program. We plan to hold trainings at several locations in our regions and institutions will be invited to the one held in their area. Please note that, as indicated in the Cancer Reporting Handbook, all hospitals (manual reporters) in this region should submit their cancer cases to the regional registry in San Antonio. This, however, does not apply to tumor registry hospitals and other electronic reporters in PHR's 8 & 11; they should send their diskettes to Austin. Please call us with your questions or concerns at (210) 614-0032.

Aftab Hashim, MBBS, MHA

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The Texas Cancer Registry has recently completed two publications:

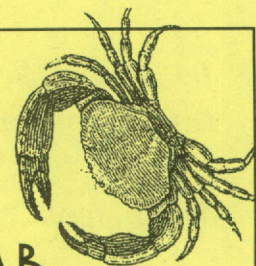
Texas Cancer Mortality Statistics, 1993. Texas Department of Health, Austin, TX, 1994, 255 pp.

Weiss NS, Risser DR, Rainbolt TR, Lloyd LE. Cancer Incidence (1989-1990) and Mortality (1981-1991) in the Texas Golden Crescent. Texas Department of Health, Austin, TX, 1994, 43pp.

These and previous publications on cancer incidence and mortality in Texas may be obtained by contacting the Texas Cancer Registry at (512) 458-7265 or (800) 252-8059 or by writing to 1100 West 49th Street, Austin 78756.

David R. Risser, PhD, MPH  
Epidemiologist

## UPDATE YOUR CANCER REPORTING WITH SANDCRAB



SANDCRAB LITE, a Texas Cancer Registry reporting software, is currently under development and will be pilot tested in April. This will be provided free of charge and is for the sole purpose of meeting our cancer reporting requirements. We may be asking some of you to pilot test this software for us. Our target date for distribution is May. If you are interested in further information regarding this new software, please contact us.



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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How do you code severe dysplasia?

Severe dysplasia (not otherwise qualified) is not reportable to the TCR.

Severe dysplasia is reportable to the TCR if it is accompanied by the terms *intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN III)* or *carcinoma in-situ*. You would then use the morphology code 80772.

Deidre Davis, CTR

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### **DO YOU NEED A CANCER REPORTING HANDBOOK FROM THE TEXAS CANCER REGISTRY?**

It has come to our attention that there may be some people who did not receive a copy of our revised cancer reporting handbook or they may need additional copies. Also, revised handbook pages have recently been mailed out. If you need a handbook or have not received the revised pages, please contact the Texas Cancer Registry by calling (512)458-7265 or (800)252-8059 or by writing to 1100 West 49th Street, Austin 78756.



## REMINDER....

In the last issue of the newsletter, we requested information documenting matching monies as required by our CDC grant. You may remember that the TCR is required to match an additional \$1 of state monies for every \$3 of federal monies received and that these must be NEW. As mentioned, we are not asking for money but for documentation of what your facility has spent on cancer registration activities in 1994 and what you expect to spend in 1995. This may be a copy of the budgets for these years. Our emphasis will be on those extra efforts on your part for the TCR. Examples include monies spent on staff and travel expenses for additional TCR training, purchase of new or additional software or equipment or other cancer registry related operating expenses. Again, this should be on your letterhead or the budget stamped with your institution's name and address. We will be very happy to assist anyone in identifying possible matching funds, so if you have any questions please call Jane Yoakum at (512) 502-0680 or 1-800 252-8059. We thank you in advance for your assistance with this very important effort.

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