



Northern New England

Understanding Why Rates of Bladder Cancer and Deaths Are High in Northern New England

Public Health Problem

Rates of bladder cancer deaths have increased among white adults in Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire over the past three decades. Between 1996 and 2000, Maine men had the highest rate of bladder cancer deaths in the nation (10.7 per 100,000 U.S. standard population versus 7.7 in the nation). Cases of bladder cancer are also on the rise. In 2003, estimated incidence rates of bladder cancer were high among Maine men (45.5 per 100,000 versus 36.6 for men nationwide) and women (12.5 versus 9.6 for women nationwide).

Program Example

With support from the National Program of Cancer Control Registries, the state health departments in Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire collaborated with the Dartmouth Medical School, the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Geological Survey on a case-control study of adults in these three states. Participants included about 1,200 adults aged 30–79 years with histologically confirmed bladder cancer and an equal number without a history of bladder cancer. Because the request for bladder cancer data needed for this study was outside of the standard reporting period for the state cancer registries, the participating health departments asked that the

hospitals and medical facilities review all cases to identify patients with bladder cancer and then report the requested information. A rapid data collection procedure was developed to allow timely personal interviews of residents with a diagnosis of bladder cancer. Residents were asked about their diet, previous residences and occupations, medical history (including family medical history), and medication and tobacco use.

In addition, drinking water and biological specimens were analyzed.

Implications and Impact

Data from this study will be used to estimate the extent to which various lifestyle, occupational, and environmental exposures explain the increased incidence of bladder cancer and related deaths among residents of Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire. Determining the importance of these potential risk factors will help guide the development of public health interventions and education programs to help residents lower their risk for bladder cancer.