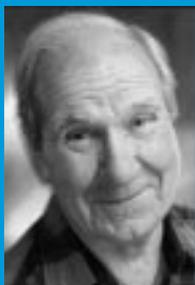


RURAL POOR AND THE MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED & CANCER



WHO WE ARE

Appalachians are residents in a region that includes 22 million people in 404 counties in 13 states between Southwestern New York and Mississippi. Central Appalachia includes the defined geographic area of West Virginia, and parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and Ohio where a higher proportion of the almost entirely White, largely rural population is poor. The Appalachian region has traditionally experienced higher poverty rates, lower education levels, and limited access to health care as compared to the nation as a whole. Approximately 65% of Appalachian counties are rural: 42% of the region's residents live in these rural counties. Furthermore, 108 of the 404 counties are categorized as distressed or severely distressed. ⁽¹⁾ For example, in 1997 the per capita income of those living in Appalachia was approximately \$4,000 less than the national average and the unemployment rate in 1998 was higher than the national average (4.8% vs. 4.5%) respectively. ⁽²⁾

Rural residents tend to be older, poorer, less educated, and are more likely to be uninsured than their urban counterparts. These rural communities have higher rates of chronic illness and disability and report poorer overall health status than their urban neighbors. Residents of rural areas generally have less contact and fewer visits with physicians and, in general, lower levels of preventive care. ^(3,4)

While poverty or low socioeconomic status has not been directly related to a higher incidence of cancer, research has shown that poverty has an adverse effect on cancer survival rates. The American Cancer Society estimates that the cancer survival rate of poor individuals is 10 to 15 percent lower than those of other Americans. ⁽⁵⁾

STATISTICAL CANCER FACTS FOR MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

- ◆ Fewer women in the Appalachia area, as compared to women outside the Appalachia area had received pap tests in the past two years (72.5% vs. 80.8%). Fewer women in households with incomes of less than \$25,000 received pap tests when compared to women in households with incomes of \$5,000 or more (80.3% vs. 88.9%). Fewer women with less than a high school education received pap tests in the past two years when compared to women with a high school education or more (67.8% vs. 86.7%). ⁽⁶⁾



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Project Director
Nicholas K. Iammarino, PhD
Research Assistant
Jose Canseco
Editorial Assistant
Patricia Chalela, MPH

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- ◆ A higher percentage of individuals residing in the Appalachian area smoke cigarettes as compared to individuals living outside Appalachia (35.1% vs. 30.9%). More individuals in households with incomes of less than \$25,000 smoke cigarettes as compared to individuals in households with incomes of \$25,000 or more (35.5% vs. 26.5%). More individuals with less than high school education smoke cigarettes as compared to individuals with a high school education or more (35.4% vs. 26.8%).⁽⁶⁾
 - ◆ The incidence of lung and bronchus cancer is higher in Whites in Eastern Kentucky than other non-Hispanic Whites in the United States.⁽⁷⁾
 - ◆ Minority women and women with low-income levels are significantly less likely to practice appropriate mammography and Pap test screening.⁽⁸⁾
 - ◆ In Calhoun County, West Virginia, breast cancer incidence is approximately 21% lower than the US rate; breast cancer mortality is over 79% higher than the US rate. Forty-three percent of the adult population has less than a high school education while 32% of the population lives in poverty.⁽⁹⁾
 - ◆ In many rural West Virginia counties, over 40% of people aged over 25 years have less than a high school education, which suggests limited reading skills and difficulty comprehending complex medical information.⁽¹⁰⁾
 - ◆ According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, 49 of the 55 counties in West Virginia were designated as medically underserved areas in 1999. Twenty-nine percent of West Virginians have no access to a primary care provider; 18.1% are not covered by health insurance.⁽¹¹⁾
 - ◆ Among males in West Virginia in 1993-97, the leading cause of cancer-related mortality was cancer of the lung and bronchus, causing well over three times more cancer deaths than any other site.⁽⁹⁾
 - ◆ Eighty percent of all children in West Virginia live in households without Internet access compared to 73% in the US.⁽¹²⁾
 - ◆ The Appalachian region has a higher mortality rate for all cancers than the US rate, 178.6% and 171.4% respectively.⁽¹⁾
 - ◆ In 1997 the number of adult smokers in Kentucky was 30.8% and 27.4% in West Virginia compared with 23.1% nationally.⁽¹³⁾
 - ◆ The number of youth smokers in 1997 was 47% in Kentucky and 41.9% in West Virginia, compared to 36.4% nationally.⁽¹³⁾
 - ◆ Logan County in West Virginia has a cancer mortality rate that is significantly higher than the US mean by more than 32%.⁽¹⁴⁾
 - ◆ In 1996, 12.8% of the total United States population lived below the poverty level, which according to the US Bureau of the Census translates to 33,944,320 people.⁽¹⁵⁾
 - ◆ A higher percentage of individuals living below the poverty level in 1998 reside in non-metropolitan than in metropolitan regions (69.1% vs. 61.0%).⁽¹⁵⁾
 - ◆ The Appalachian area of Kentucky has the highest poverty rate and lowest education level in the state and the population is predominantly White.⁽⁶⁾
 - ◆ The overall age-adjusted incidence (1995-1997) of lung cancer in Kentucky was 85.03% (84.35% for Whites, 97.18% for Blacks), and 98.25% for Appalachia.⁽⁶⁾
 - ◆ In 1996, West Virginia had the 8th highest rate of death due to cancer, the 2nd highest rate of death due to cardiovascular disease, and the 3rd highest rate of death due to diabetes.⁽¹⁶⁾
 - ◆ Women in three Appalachian counties have experienced breast cancer mortality rates more than 33% higher than the national rate; in seven counties the mortality rate significantly exceeds the national rate.⁽⁴⁾
 - ◆ The cervical cancer rate among Appalachian Kentucky women is almost twice as high as the incidence rate reported in NCI's SEER data for White American women.⁽¹⁷⁾
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- ◆ Approximately 60% of second and third grade students used chewing tobacco daily in one West Florida County, requiring on-site school intervention. This habit was most often introduced to these children by their own parents. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ◆ Appalachian counties in Kentucky have a lung cancer mortality rate 43% higher than the US rate. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ◆ West Virginia lung cancer mortality rates (both male and female) are 25% higher than the US rates. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ◆ Kentucky also has a significantly higher rate of mortality of cervical cancer, 68% higher than the US rate and 50% higher than the rate for Appalachia. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ◆ Pennsylvania's Appalachian region mortality rate for colorectal cancer is 13% higher than the US rate. ⁽¹⁹⁾

Additional facts and information on Rural Poor and Medically Underserved populations can be found at <http://iccnetwork.org/cancerfacts>

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