

Community Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
For the Cancer Cluster Investigation
September 28, 2011

TAC Purpose: a). To provide assistance in determining what questions should be examined regarding cancer numbers – geographic region, time period, types of cancers, etc. and then and b). To identify options for how to answer the question(s)/hypothesis(es).

Working Hypothesis: There is an increased rate of cancers (gather data on all, possibly narrow down later based on confirmed exposures) within a ¼ mile radius around Ft. Detrick (Area A and B).

I. Introductions

Members Present: J. Bee (via phone); B. Brookmyer; R. Clark; J. Hahn; E. Kruse; C. Rice; S. Rice; G. Rudy (toward the end); J. Sawitzke.

II. Review of Notes from August 17 Meeting

No changes

III. Update on Ed Kruse's Research Efforts

Survey not distributed yet. [Statistical] Power calculation indicates he will need 400-700 matched pairs to make sure enough responses when performing an odds ratio to be able to get statistical significance. Seeking opportunities for public information sessions in Walkersville, Middletown, and Frederick. Also focus on respondents who have lived long-term in the area. Discussed using Maryland Cancer Registry data and cancer data geocoding to make assumptions about a level of accuracy and scale.

IV. Update from Members on Other Data Collection Efforts

a. School-linked case finding

Significant progress made in testing the steps necessary to get the names to then find them to ask about their personal cancer experiences. Waverly and Walkersville class lists were found from the Frederick News Post annual August publication of the class lists. Some years were too blurry to copy+paste into a database. Discussed approaches. Plan to query about elementary school children from the years 1965-1991 by 5-year periods of interest. Start first with gathering the lists, organize the database and then try to contact former students from those class lists. RC to pursue optical scanning of class lists and then conversion to electronic data format. Still have problem with text that is not clear in the format available in the library. Study design would be a class cohort approach to provide the "case" and "control" study subjects to avoid the need for unavailable population data. Waverly and Walkersville class lists searched. Yellow Springs ES is also of interest, but class lists not found for all years in Frederick News Post search.

Also discussed possible survey content – year of diagnosis, age of diagnosis, diagnosis and make it anonymous and confidential with cover letter attached explaining the purpose. Discussed factors impacting response rates to surveys such as a personal appeal being made from someone perceived as friendly and trustworthy versus

communication originating from a more distanced or research approach. It was recommended that the person analyzing the data see only the numbers and not the other personally identifying information. If surveys would be distributed via e-mail and/or postal mail then it would require an additional step to figure out current addresses. Discussed goal to construct a database for all possible years, yet consider starting with kids who were in the area of study all 5 years.

b. Old Address lists

As above discussed various approaches to get names to then find former residents to be able to survey them. If pursue just Waverly Elementary School (ES) then don't need to figure out who live in one-mile increments each year because they lived and spent time close enough to FD by based upon their being assigned to that school. Another approach would be to figure out what the address cut-offs would be in a one-mile buffer from FD and then use the Hill-Donnelly Directories to get names associated with building owners/deed names for each year to then match those names with Waverly ES names to estimate population figures for that area. The Hill-Donnelly Directory indicates if property is probably homeowner occupied or renter occupied.

c. KRF

No update available.

d. Maryland Cancer Registry Data Analysis

Next meeting October 5 in Winchester Hall at 6:30pm to review the summary report of the analysis of the Maryland-Cancer-Registry-data-from-the-time-period-1992-2008-for-the-specified-cancers-in-the-geographic-areas-examined.

V. Sharing of Other information Relevant to Member Interests

a. National Academy of Sciences – Next meeting October 17 in DC. See e-mail from BB sent a couple of weeks ago about this.

b. Containment Laboratory Community Advisory Committee – Presentation to BoCC October 4 on structure and performance along with other committees.

c. Story Collection – Discussed interest of Johns Hopkins School Bloomberg School of Public Health is interested in writing a story for their magazine from the public health perspective and including interviews with persons who have been involved in the investigation in all different ways. Consensus was that this would also be worthwhile in addition to the early proposed story collection project.

d. KRF - No update available of previous report of plan for Senator Mikulski visit.

e. EPA Star Fellowship – Per Ed, proposals being accepted to work on environmental and public health issues and they are considering applying to support well testing.

- f. Fort Detrick RAB Meeting – Jen taking ideas for improved communication to the next RAB meeting. Send ideas to her.

VI. Next Meeting --- Wednesday, November 2 at 7:00pm

DRAFT