



For Immediate Release

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Follow-up Study Shows No Increasing Trend for Bladder Cancer in Stratford

Stratford, Connecticut — A new study from the state Department of Public Health looking at health data collected over the past 42 years shows there is no increasing trend for bladder cancer in Stratford men or women

The study follows previous studies conducted by the department in response to public concerns about the possible health effects of contamination from the former Raymark facility in Stratford.

“These findings come as a great relief because earlier studies hinted at possible increasing trends in bladder cancer among men and women in Stratford,” said Andrea Boissevain, Director of Health for the Town of Stratford.

“This new study is important because with the additional 11 years of bladder cancer data we looked at since our last study in 2001, we can say that there is no increasing trend for bladder cancer in Stratford over the past 42 years,” said Meg Harvey, an epidemiologist with DPH and primary author of the study. She added, “because of this finding, we are not recommending any further cancer follow-up studies in Stratford at this time.”

DPH used data from its Tumor Registry to evaluate bladder cancers from 1965 to 2007, the most recent year with complete cancer statistics. Looking at 5-year increments, the study compared Stratford’s bladder cancer rates with the state’s overall rate for this cancer. It also compared the town’s rates with 15 towns that are similar to Stratford in population size, and five towns sharing a border with Stratford.

Study Findings

Over the 42 years of bladder cancer data evaluated in the study, DPH found no consistent increasing or decreasing trend for men or women’s bladder cancer in Stratford. DPH also found that bladder cancer trends over time in the geographic areas were similar to Stratford.

During the 1985-1989 time period, there was more bladder cancer in Stratford in relation to each of the geographic comparison areas. This finding was observed in DPH’s earlier bladder cancer studies. Data also show that during 1995-1999, Stratford women had a lower rate of bladder

cancer as compared with other towns. While these differences were significant from a statistical standpoint, they each only appeared during a single, 5-year time interval and could be due to random fluctuations in cancer cases. The type of health study that was conducted is not designed to determine what might have caused a cancer elevation.

Previous Health Studies

The Raymark manufacturing facility operated in Stratford from 1919 to 1989 producing brake, clutch and other friction products. Wastes generated from its manufacturing processes included lead, PCBs, copper and solvents. Concerns about the possible health effects of waste disposed of at the Raymark facility and other locations in Stratford came to the forefront in the early 1990's.

In 1993, DPH conducted a preliminary review of cancer rates and found that although the overall incidence of cancer in Stratford was not elevated from 1958 to 1991, there were some differences in Stratford rates compared to overall state rates for bladder cancer, mesothelioma (a rare cancer in the thin layer of tissue that covers the majority of internal organs, including the lungs) and cancer in people less than 25 years of age.

This finding prompted DPH to conduct a follow-up study. This study, published in 1998, looked at 5 year intervals from 1968 to 1991 and found an apparent increasing trend in male bladder cancer in Stratford. The trend, however, appeared to be town-wide and not associated with living closer to locations with Raymark waste.

The study also found a higher level of bladder cancer among women living near some, but not all known, Raymark waste sites. However, this finding was not replicated in DPH's subsequent bladder cancer study published in 2001.

Rates for mesothelioma did not warrant further study, nor did cancer in young people because the rates for both types of cancer did not differ from state rates and the cancer patterns were not associated with living near Raymark waste areas.

In 2001, DPH re-analyzed bladder cancer data from the 1998 study using improved methods to assess whether living near Raymark waste sites was associated with increased bladder cancer rates. Slight elevations in bladder cancer among women who lived closer to Raymark waste sites were observed, but the finding was not consistent over the entire study period (1968-1998) and there were no increasing trends over time. Bladder cancer in men continued to show an apparent increasing trend town-wide (but not associated with living close to Raymark waste). The finding of an apparent increasing male bladder cancer trend in Stratford prompted DPH to conduct another follow-up study. This is the study being released today.

Cancer Risks

Bladder cancer can take as long as 20 years or more to develop. Cigarette smoking is the greatest risk factor for bladder cancer, and according to the American Cancer Society, smokers are more than twice as likely to get bladder cancer as nonsmokers. Workplace exposures to chemicals used in the dye, leather, rubber and printing industries have been associated with elevated

bladder cancer rates. Other workers with increased risk of bladder cancer include painters, dry cleaners, hairdressers and truck drivers. Studies have also shown that exposure to arsenic and chlorination by-products in drinking water may increase one's risk of bladder cancer.

According to recent data from the Connecticut Tumor Registry, the five most commonly diagnosed cancers in Stratford are breast, prostate, colorectal, lung and bladder cancer. These 5 cancers accounted for almost 60% of the cancers diagnosed in Stratford, a similar pattern to that observed in the state. Of these 5 common cancers, 3 types were elevated in Stratford compared with Connecticut overall: female breast, prostate, and female colorectal. The risk factors for these three cancers are predominantly lifestyle (smoking, diet, exercise) and genetic (family history, age).

How will data from this study be used?

DPH's bladder cancer study released today and the recent Connecticut Tumor Registry statistics will be used by the Stratford Health Department as part of its Community Health Assessment to better understand the needs of the community. The needs assessment serves as a planning tool to help prioritize where resources can have the biggest impact on the health of Stratford's residents. One logical activity might be to better promote smoking cessation programs in Stratford or promote and encourage residents to have colorectal cancer screenings.

Copies of DPH's studies and accompanying fact sheets are available on the Stratford Health Department's website www.townofstratford.com/health.

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