



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

August 29, 2001

Leslie Balch, MPH, RN
Director of Health
Quinnipiack Valley Health District
1151 Hartford Turnpike
North Haven, CT 06473

Dear Ms. Balch,

We have reviewed the information you provided regarding the incidence of cancer among the residents who participated in the neighborhood survey in Hamden. Most of the cases of cancer were verified in the Tumor Registry records. These cases occurred among individuals age 22 to 85. Some of the cases were recently diagnosed and a few of the cases dated back to 1974. Any diagnosis of cancer is a serious issue for the person and their family, however, the number and types of cancer that were reported do not appear to be in excess of what would be expected to occur.

The Department of Public Health is often asked to review information regarding incidence of cancer. People can become concerned when it appears that there may be an unusual occurrence of cancer in their neighborhood, work environment, or if there are other concerns about environmental contamination in their neighborhood. Cancer, however, is a relatively common disease. One of every three persons will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lifetime. Fortunately, many persons now survive a diagnosis of cancer and live long lives. Cancer is actually many diseases. Cancer such as breast, lung, and colon cancer are all specific, individual types of cancer. What causes lung cancer might be very different than what causes brain cancer. Additionally, the risk factors associated with the development of specific cancers, such as breast cancer, are not the same as what is associated with lung or colon cancer. Unless the types of cancer are the same, there is even less of a reason to think that cases may have a common cause.

The information that you provided does not indicate that there is an excess of cases of cancer in that neighborhood. If you have further questions please contact me at (860) 509-7756. The following Internet resources have additional information on cancer that may be helpful.

National Cancer Institute:

http://cancernet.nci.nih.gov/clinpdq/risk/Cancer_Clusters.html

Centers for Disease Control:

<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/npcr/new.htm#cluster>

American Cancer Society:

<http://www.cancer.org/statistics/cff2000/data/probability.html>

Sincerely,

Diane D. Aye, MPH, PhD
Epidemiologist



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