Overview

For the past several years, cancer has surpassed heart disease as the leading cause of death in Catawba County, NC. Addressing the prevention of cancer and cancer-related mortality was deemed a county health priority following community health assessments in 2007 and 2011. As a result, the Cancer Task Force (a community coalition) was formed to address cancer prevention in Catawba County. Key findings from the 2011 assessment include the following:

- The age-adjusted cancer death rate in Catawba County is 201.4 per 100,000.
- Between the 2007 and 2011 assessments, cancer mortality rates increased slightly across Catawba County; the biggest increase (20%) was in breast cancer mortality.
- Disparities in cancer mortality rates are significant:
  » Minority population, overall—130% higher
  » Minority population, prostate—102% higher
  » Minority population, colon—63% higher
  » White population, lung—38% higher
  » White population, breast—12% higher
- Compared to North Carolina cancer mortality rates, Catawba County has slightly higher death rates for all cancers:
  » Total cancer death rates—7% higher
  » Colon cancer—27% higher
  » Lung cancer—9% higher
- Lung cancer has the highest death rate in Catawba County and is among the most preventable cancers.
- Colon cancer has the lowest death rate in Catawba County but is also among the most preventable.

The 2011 assessment also identified the following risk factors for cancer in Catawba County:

- Tobacco use—22% of Catawba County adults are current smokers.
- Overweight and obesity—72% of adults in Catawba County are overweight or obese; 27% of those are obese.
- Physical inactivity—9.9% of adults meet both aerobic and strengthening exercise guidelines; 27% of adults are physically inactive.
- Poor nutrition—10.6% of adults report eating five or more servings of fruits, vegetables, or legumes daily.
- Uninsured—19% of adults in Catawba County are uninsured.
- Lack of compliance with cancer screenings—69% of women report compliance with mammogram recommendations (only data available).

In addition, policy leaders, the medical community, and other stakeholders cited the following needs related to cancer in the community:

- Although many cancer prevention and early detection programs are available in Catawba County, racial disparities exist in cancer deaths. Improved outreach to minority communities will lessen those disparities.
- Despite widespread progress in tobacco control throughout the county, lung cancer deaths have increased among Catawba County’s white population and are particularly high among men. Efforts must focus on smoking prevention, reduction, and cessation in the county’s adult population.
- Catawba County has few colorectal and lung cancer prevention and early detection assets; these gaps need to be closed through education and screening.
- Resources and funding opportunities for screenings, prevention, and treatment are needed by a large number of county residents.
The community health assessments also show that Catawba County has outstanding resources to treat individuals diagnosed with cancer, including two hospitals with designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers, a mobile mammography unit, and a variety of non-profit support and education programs and groups. While the community also has a wide array of screening and prevention resources, such as health education programs and free screenings, they may be underused by or inaccessible to the populations who most need them.

Selection of Worksites

Following the 2007 assessment, the Cancer Task Force promoted colorectal and prostate cancer screenings with a focus on minority populations in Catawba County. Through this outreach, the Cancer Task Force learned that broader community-level supports were needed to help increase individual behavior change with respect to recommended screenings, particularly among minority populations. The coalition determined that its community health assessment charter—to reduce and ultimately prevent cancer incidence and cancer-related mortality across the county—would be best fulfilled by developing community-level, rather than individual-level, interventions to address cancer prevention.

As a result, following the 2011 assessment, the Cancer Task Force selected worksites as its primary sector for developing and implementing evidence-based, community-level policy, systems, and environmental change interventions. The following factors influenced the selection of the worksite sector:

- Evidence showing the effectiveness of certain worksite wellness programs and policies in improving health, including specific cancer risk factors such as obesity and tobacco use;
- Increased interest in worksite wellness interventions and cancer prevention among local businesses;
- The opportunity to promote healthy behaviors through policy, systems, and environmental change strategies impacting a large number of adults from wide-ranging demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds;
- The ability to increase access to/compliance with cancer screenings in environments where cost or behavioral barriers may be reduced or eliminated; and
- The potential for worksites to provide centralized locations and accountable, measurable processes for improving and preventing multiple cancer risk factors.

A recent survey of Catawba County worksites conducted by the Cancer Task Force revealed the following information related to local worksite wellness programming:

- 70.5% of worksites reported use of a worksite wellness program;
- 79.1% of companies have a tobacco-free policy for buildings, but only 43.4% provide information to employees about cessation resources;
- 39.5% provide on-site nutrition education programming; however, 27.9% of worksites do nothing to promote healthy eating;
- 47% of employers provide reduced rate/free gym memberships for employees; however, 31.3% of worksites surveyed do nothing to promote physical activity;
- Most companies provide full or partial coverage for cancer screenings, but 41.8% do nothing to promote cancer screenings among employees;
- Lack of employee interest was cited as the biggest barrier to worksite wellness success, with 55.3% of respondents selecting this option; and
- The larger the company, the more likely it was to implement some form of wellness programming related to tobacco, physical activity, nutrition, or cancer screenings.

Cancer Task Force Well Business Program

Taking the above factors and past experience into account, the Cancer Task Force developed a well business program to incentivize local businesses to develop or enhance worksite wellness policies or programs that meet evidence-based recommendations to prevent cancer. Worksites can contribute to a sustainable environment for cancer prevention among a large and diverse population—the adult workforce—in Catawba County.

The program’s intended short-term outcome will be an increase in worksites that implement evidence-based practices through policy, systems, and environmental changes to improve employee health. Intermediate outcomes include improving health behaviors among employees. Long-term, the program aims to achieve positive change in community health indicators related to cancer and its risk factors—such as reduced tobacco use, increased physical activity, improved nutrition, increased cancer screenings, and ultimately reduced cancer incidence and mortality.
Through the program, local companies in Catawba County are invited to apply for annual recognition in achieving program standards. Because the program commends companies for helping to prevent cancer through their worksite wellness programs, recognition standards comprise evidence-based and best practice recommendations for four primary cancer risk categories: tobacco, physical activity, nutrition, and cancer screenings.

To be recognized as a Cancer Task Force Well Business, companies formally apply by providing documentation of their policies and qualitative and quantitative data related to wellness outcomes for each category. The Cancer Task Force reviews applications and provides technical assistance toward meeting program standards and implementing evidence-based practices.

All standards are weighted based on affinity with the evidence base, which allows each application to be scored and businesses to be ranked as Gold, Silver, or Bronze Well Businesses. This ranking helps equalize the opportunity for companies of varying sizes and revenues. A special award category for companies that implement innovative evidence-based wellness solutions that fall outside the list of standards will also be available.

An annual recognition ceremony/networking event and local publicity will be provided for all Well Business designees. Additionally, each company will receive an award, signage, and a website widget indicating its designation as a Cancer Task Force Well Business.

In Year One, the program is being piloted and evaluated with a minimum of three and a maximum of nine local companies. In Year Two, the program will be promoted to all interested worksites in Catawba County and implemented on an annual basis from that point forward.

Additionally, the Cancer Task Force is developing technical assistance resources for businesses interested in implementing new evidence-based practices to gain recognition or attain higher levels of recognition via improved practices.

How did the Community Guide Contribute?

The Cancer Task Force used The Guide to Community Preventive Services (Community Guide) to help develop an action plan for the Cancer Task Force Well Business Program. The Community Guide was a primary resource for evidence-based cancer risk factor prevention practices that were incorporated into the Cancer Task Force Well Business worksite survey and program application (assessment tool). Through the program, these evidence-based practices are used as standards for worksites to voluntarily meet through their wellness programs, thereby encouraging and ensuring the use of evidence-based worksite practices that can help prevent cancer. Examples of practices from the Community Guide include the following:

**Tobacco Use:**
- Reduction of out-of-pocket costs for tobacco-cessation programs
- Smoking bans and restrictions to reduce environmental smoke
- Multi-component interventions that include client telephone support to increase tobacco cessation

**Nutrition:**
- Multi-component interventions aimed at diet, physical activity, and cognitive change

**Physical Activity:**
- Point-of-decision prompts to increase physical activity
- Enhanced access to physical activity facilities in combination with informational outreach
- Multi-component interventions aimed at diet, physical activity, and cognitive change
- Individually adapted health behavior change to increase physical activity

**Cancer Screening:**
- Reduced costs and barriers to preventive health screenings
- Small media to increase screening for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers
- One-on-one education to increase breast and cervical cancer screening
Resources

Other resources used for program development, particularly in selecting worksite criteria and making the business case for health, included the following:

- Investing in Health: Proven Health Promotion Practices for Workplaces (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Partners in Prevention).
- National Healthy Worksite Program (CDC)
- Workplace Health Promotion site (CDC)
- Cancer Control P.L.A.N.E.T. (Department of Health and Human Services)
- RTIPS (National Cancer Institute/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- Using What Works: Adapting Evidence-Based Programs to Fit Your Needs (National Cancer Institute)
- U.S. Preventive Services Task Force
- Healthy NC 2020 (North Carolina Department of Health)
- Prevention Means Business (Public Health Institute and American Public Health Association)

Additionally, the task force reviewed existing evidence-based worksite recognition programs to provide further guidance in developing program structure, criteria, assessment, recognition components, and implementation, such as the following:

- American Cancer Society’s Workplace Solutions
- CDC’s Worksite Health Score Card
- CEO Gold Standard
- Mayor’s Health & Fitness Council (Austin, TX)
- WorkWell, NC (Eat Smart Move More North Carolina)
- WorkWell Initiative (Thurston County, WA)
- Healthy Howard Healthy Worksites (Howard County, MD)
- Fit Friendly Worksites (American Heart Association)

Impact

As a result of participating in the National Association of County and City Health Officials’ Community Guide Demonstration Grant, the Cancer Task Force broadened its understanding and knowledge of evidence-based practices. The coalition increased its capacity to identify, understand, adapt, and implement evidence-based practices into program plans.

Because the coalition is one of four managed by Catawba County Public Health, the health department is sharing these lessons across all coalition activities with a renewed emphasis on identifying and using evidence-based practices whenever possible. Tools that were developed during this process—specifically the evidence-based practice matrix—are being used by all four coalitions during assessment and program planning phases.

Using the Community Guide to develop the program provided the following benefits:

- Easy access to evidence-based strategies and support tools relevant to the program area (cancer prevention—including tobacco use, physical activity/nutrition (obesity), and cancer screening);
- Direction on selecting appropriate strategies by indicating those that are not recommended or have insufficient evidence;
- Understanding of how to build/adapt evidence into program planning; and
- Ability to call a program “evidence-based,” which gives it additional credibility with local businesses (participants), the general community, and potential funders.

Foundational elements of the program’s success—the development of a sound action plan that incorporates evidence-based practices as gold standards for recognition—are in place thanks to the Community Guide process. Through this initiative, the Cancer Task Force Well Business Program hopes to encourage the replication of evidence-based practices across all participating worksites, thereby increasing the community’s ability to successfully prevent cancer and improve population health.

Acknowledgments: This document was made possible through support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Cooperative Agreement #1U38OT000172-01. NACCHO is grateful for this support. The views expressed within do not necessarily represent those of the sponsor.