Letter from the Alaska Native Tumor Registry Director

Hello, and welcome to the summer 2020 edition of the ANTR newsletter,

I want to start by thanking you for your help in gathering information on our 2018 cancer cases. As many of you know, the cancer surveillance community faced many challenges in 2019 (2018 diagnosis year), with major changes to the coding rules impacting several other areas in the process. In no small part thanks to you, our partners across the state, we find ourselves in the enviable position of being almost caught up with 2018 casefinding. We know that 2020 brings new challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic and appreciate your amazing efforts to keep our communities safe and healthy, while still collecting the cancer information that will help us understand and reduce the burden of cancer among Alaska Native people.

Since our last newsletter, we have had some staff changes that I would like to share. Our long time tumor registrar, Teri Schade, retired from her position with ANTR last September. Teri remains part of the ANTR family, and keeps in touch. We are so grateful for all Teri has done for the ANTR, and wish her all the best as she enjoys spending more time with her young grandchildren. At the beginning of this year, we welcomed our new registrar, Keri Miller, who some of you may recognize as she joins us from Providence hospital (see pg 2 for her short bio). Keri has settled in well to life at the central registry and we look forward to many years of learning from her experience and wisdom.

Before COVID-19 required us to stay-in-place, we were able to participate in several events in our community to share the ANTR data. In January, I was able to travel to Phoenix to participate in the Maniilaq Association's annual board retreat and be a part of a discussion around cancer and cancer care in their communities (pg 2). At the Alaska Public Health Summit in January I was also able to present on the lifetime risk information cards that we produced last year. Please let us know if you would like any of these cards to share with your communities, we would be happy to send some to you free of charge. As you might expect, the last month or so has been quiet on the travel and conference front, meaning that we have had fewer opportunities than usual to share the work that we have been doing, locally and nationally. But we continue to plug away working on various studies and data requests (see pg 3 for an example of a recent study on pediatric cancers), and look forward to sharing these data when the world is back open for business.

As always, we hope you find this newsletter informative and of interest. Please let us know if there is anything that you would like to see covered in these pages, and until our next issue, please stay safe and well!

Sincerely,
Sarah
CHECK YOUR INBOX

Thank you for your help in making our data collection successful!

Currently we have collected information on 487 cases for year 2018. Many thanks to the facilities that work with us to make this happen.

We will be begin casefinding for 2019 soon. Please check your inbox for our requests.

Out in the Community

We love it when we can give back to the communities that we serve by providing data, creating educational materials, contributing to discussions around how to control cancer, or whatever it is that our partners need. The beginning of 2020 has been a little quieter on this front with the stay-in-place orders to combat the spread of COVID-19; however, earlier this year, Dr. Nash was able to participate in a conversation around cancer control and cancer care with the Maniilaq Board of Directors during their annual retreat. In this presentation, Dr. Nash discussed the leading cancers in the Northwest Arctic region, showed how cancer rates in the region compared to Alaska Native people statewide, and provided some food for thought around cancer prevention activities and screening rates. She spoke in a panel alongside Dr. Miriampillai, head of ANMC’s Oncology department, and Ms. Muller, who runs the ANTHC Cancer Program, and who has been instrumental in putting together our Comprehensive Cancer Control Plans. The ANTR was also able to provide the Board with a handout with information to take home and incorporate into their future discussions.

If you, or anyone in your community, would like to know more about cancer among Alaska Native people, or in your region, please don’t hesitate to get in touch at antr@anthc.org. We are here to provide a resource, and always enjoy answering your questions!

About Us: Welcome Keri!

Cancer Tumor Registrar II – Keri Miller, MHA, BA, CTR II

My Name is Keri Miller and I am excited to start my new role as the SEER Manager for the Alaska Native Tumor Registry. For the past two years, I have been actively pursuing my Masters in Health Administration, and graduated in April. When I am not at work, you will likely find me with my friends or family. I enjoy bike riding, skiing (cross country and downhill) along with swimming, though I am not very good at any of these activities. I have been able to play it off that I am “just hanging back with the kids”. My husband and I have been dating since high school and are about to hit the 20-year mark this year. During this time, we have lived in Utah, Nome (where he grew up), Oregon, and Anchorage.
Data Use: Pediatric cancers among Alaska Native people

Each edition, we try to bring you some information on how ANTR data are being used to understand cancer among Alaska Native people. Here, we wanted to share a recent study that we’ve been working on with two pediatric healthcare providers, Matthew Hirschfeld and Laura Schulz, which looked at how the burden of pediatric cancer has changed over time. We looked at data on cancer in all Alaska Native people aged 0-19 years, comparing cases diagnosed in 1969-1996 to 1997-2016. Here are a few key findings:

- Incidence of pediatric cancers increased by approximately 40% between the two time-periods.
- The types of cancers also changed over time. Notably, there were far fewer cases of hepatic tumors in the recent time period. This is likely because of Hepatitis B vaccination programs, which began in the 1980s.
- Cancer survival was high, especially in the most recent time-period: the proportion of pediatric cancer patients still alive five years after diagnosis was 76%. Also, after adjusting for age, sex, and cancer site, we observed a 57% reduction in risk of death when comparing cases diagnosed in 1997-2016 to those diagnosed in 1969-1996.
- It has been over two decades since we examined the epidemiology of pediatric cancers among our population. Having up to date information on this topic will be very informative for those who are providing cancer care to Alaska Native children in our community.

Did You Know?

The Alaska Native Tumor Registry is housed within ANTHC’s Alaska Native Epidemiology Center (EpiCenter), one of 12 Tribal Epidemiology Centers (TECs) nationwide. It is part of the TECs’ mission to make public health information available to its tribal partners. The EpiCenter is your go-to resource for data on a wide variety of topics, including cancer. Examples of summary data that the EpiCenter can provide include: The Alaska Trauma Registry, Hospital Discharge Data, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Pregnancy Risk Assessment, Monitoring System, Infectious Disease Surveillance, and Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

Services provided by the EpiCenter include responding to data requests, technical assistance and training, and providing data directly on our website through factsheets. If you, or anyone in your organization, is looking for data or data-related technical assistance, please share our contact information with them.

anthctoday.org/epicenter • (907) 729-4567 • anepicenter@anthc.org

50 Year Report

ANTR will be creating and publishing the 50 year report on cancer among Alaska Native people in 2020! We’ve heard from several partners on things they found most useful about the 45 year report, and things they’d like to see in the 50 year report.

If you have any additional thoughts to share, please send them to antr@anthc.org.
Have You Seen Our Website?

Alaska Native Epidemiology Center

The Alaska Native Tumor Registry

The Alaska Native Tumor Registry (ANTR) is a collection of cancer information going back to 1969 on all Alaska Native and American Indian individuals living in Alaska at the time of their diagnosis. The mission of the ANTR is to contribute to the wellness of Alaska Native people by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating cancer information.

The Alaska Native Tumor Registry: An Introduction

Want to receive our newsletter via email? Contact us at antr@anthc.org to be added to our newsletter email list.

Remember, you can find all of our cancer-related reports and factsheets online at anthctoday.org/epicenter/antr.html