The research goes on

Causes of high cancer rate 'unknown'

by Betsy Cook

The statistics are in, the data has been collected, and the results are out. St. Mary Parish, according to the results of Dr. Max Ginsberg, has the highest incidence of lung cancer in the United States that are listed as "Cancer Hot Spots," and that ten people in those parishes study lung cancer research in this state; Dr. Max Ginsberg, of the LSU Medical Center, Dr. Mariseg Gottlieb of the Tulane School of Medicine, and Dr. Peayco Correa of the LSU Medical School, Dr. Rothschild had conducted a retrospective study involving ten south Louisiana parishes; St. Mary was not among them. Dr. Rothschild found an interesting correlation between sugarcane farmers and a high incidence of mortality from lung cancer. "We're trying to do some more studies to see what it might be; could be the insecticide, could be some sort of fungicide," Dr. Rothschild remarked.

One possibility that he is looking into is to see if there may be some sort of predisposition of the people that perform studies towards lung cancer. He found a much higher incidence of first degree relatives who have lung cancer than in the control population. (First degree relatives are parents and their siblings). That does not mean that the problem is genetic because, as the doctor pointed out, people are usually exposed to the same environmental factors.

Meanwhile, Dr. Peayco Correa has for the last two years been conducting some studies of his own on air or soil of Louisiana. The results? None yet. Dr. Correa reported that an international conference will be held in March in New Orleans, calling on experts from all over the world to analyze all of the data. "By that time we hope to have some answers."

When asked how he would present some conjecture on the subject, Dr. Correa replied, "At this moment, I can say that nobody knows. The only thing that is absolutely certain, that causes lung cancer is smoking."

When asked if there might be a direct link between the petrochemical industry and the cancer rate, he replied, "There's no proof." On to Dr. Gottlieb.

She has been conducting studies on the subject for the past six years, and is on her third major study. In the studies, areas of the state that drank the water. the mouth, the esophagus, and larynx. Since no one wants to point to any one cause, or single out definite causation, except those that we have certain clues and the implications are so great that you can't really be premature," Dr. Marisegottled pointed out.

If Dr. Bottie has any clues as to the cause, then she's not telling, and neither are Dr. Carrera and Dr. Rothschild. Indirectly, Dr. Gottlieb has hinted at causes, citing that the rectal and colon cancer rate for south Louisiana is similar to the heavily industrialized northeast quadrant of the U.S. South Louisiana is also heavily industrialized, with the petrochemical industry.

Yet to implicate industry is to implicate the industrialization of our nation and point to the possibility that before industrialization the cancer rate was not as high as it is today. Dr. Marisegottled pointed out that the life span of an individual was much shorter then it is now. We don't really know what the cancer rate was like then.

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