Heart ailments, cancer top killers

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Heart disease and cancer caused the death of more Louisianians last year than any other medical ailment, and East Baton Rouge Parish ranked among the top four parishes in deaths caused by both, according to a 1981 state vital statistics report.

However, the parish ranks near the bottom of the list in cancer deaths per capita. Such rural parishes as Winn, Bienville, Cameron, Madison and LaSalle had far higher cancer rates than did urban Baton Rouge.

East Baton Rouge as well as neighboring East and West Feliciana parishes rank in the bottom third of the state's 64 parishes in heart deaths per capita. East Baton Rouge ranks 47th, while East and West Feliciana rank 44th and 46th, respectively.

The five parishes with the highest heart death rates per capita are Red River, Richland, Claiborne, Winn and Tensas—rural, less-populous parishes. The parishes have a median age higher than most parishes in the state and a higher percentage of residents over age 65, according to 1980 census data.

The Louisiana Vital Statistics Report said East Baton Rouge recorded 930 heart disease-related deaths in 1981, putting it third among the state's 64 parishes. The report also said 478 parish residents died of cancer in 1981, the state's fourth highest.

The findings are contained in the report published annually by the Department of Health and Human Resources' Office of Health Services and Environmental Quality.

Statewide, 35,745 persons died in 1981, the report said, with 12,989 of those deaths attributed to heart disease and 7,166 to malignant tumors.

Of those dying of cancer, the largest number had cancer of the respiratory and intrathoracic organs (2,117). Cancer of the digestive organs and peritoneum caused the second-largest number of deaths (1,731), the report said.

Orleans and Jefferson parishes registered the highest number of both heart disease and cancer-related deaths, ranking first and second respectively in both categories. Orleans recorded 2,248 heart-related deaths and 1,234 cancer; Jefferson, 1,036 heart and 662 cancer.

On a per capita basis, Orleans was 10th out of 64 parishes in cancer deaths and 15th in heart deaths.

Caddo ranked fourth in deaths related to heart ailments, with 873, and third in cancer deaths with 557. Caddo ranked 11th in cancer deaths per capita and 27th in heart disease related deaths.

Other area parishes and deaths recorded include:

- Heart deaths: Ascension, 112; East Feliciana, 49; Iberville, 126; Lafayette, 307; Livingston, 137; West Baton Rouge, 54; and West Feliciana, 31.

- Cancer deaths: Ascension, 62; East Feliciana, 36; Iberville, 59; Lafayette, 198; Livingston, 72; West Baton Rouge, 31; and West Feliciana, 16.