14,000 new cancer cases predicted for La. in '82

The American Cancer Society is projecting 14,000 new cancer cases in Louisiana this year. More than half those cases — 7,400 — are predicted to end in death, according to the society’s “1982 Cancer Facts and Figures.”

The society estimated about the same incidence of new cases in 1981, but the number of deaths is an increase of 100 over what the society projected for 1981.

The projected death rate per 100,000 population actually decreased from 1981 to 1982, according to society figures. The estimated rate in 1981 was 184 while the prediction for 1982 is 160 per 100,000 persons, society figures show.

Statistics available from the state Department of Health and Human Resources for 1980 show 6,893 persons had cancer listed on death certificates as a cause of death.

Numbers for 1981 have not been compiled yet.

In the four parish area surrounding Baton Rouge, 594 persons died of cancer in 1980 with 457 of those deaths occurring in East Baton Rouge Parish, according to state figures.

There were 21 cancer deaths in West Baton Rouge, 59 in Livingston and 57 in Ascension Parish.

Of the total number of new cancer cases predicted among residents of the state, about 2,300 are expected to be lung cancer, according to the society.

Nearly all those who contract lung cancer are expected to die, society statistics show.

“If it weren’t for lung cancer, the overall cancer death rate would actually be going down,” said Lawrence Garfinkle, the society’s vice president for epidemiology and statistics and director of cancer prevention.

“The rapidly rising lung cancer death rate has obscured a reduction in death rates for all other kinds of cancer combined,” Garfinkle said.

Deaths attributed to cancer appear to be increasing but only because lung cancer deaths are forcing the numbers up, he said.

“When lung cancer is taken out of the (national) totals, the overall cancer death rate is definitely headed the other way,” Garfinkle said.

Between 1950 and 1978, the last year figures are available, the death rate for cancer increased from 157 to 169.9 per 100,000 persons, Garfinkle said.

If lung cancer deaths are excluded, he said the overall death rate actually decreased from 144 to 128.7.

“The irony of this situation is that lung cancer is the most preventable of all diseases. The best way to avoid getting it is to give up cigarettes,” Garfinkle said.