Tumor registry pinpoints cancer incidence

By Pamela Glisson

According to Amy Steadley, director of affairs for the Acadia
na Medical Research Foundation (AMRF), “Acadiana residents
are aware of such organizations as the American Cancer Society
(ACS), which gives estimates on cancer for our residents, but are
unaware of us.”

She was referring, not only to
the foundation, but to the Acadia-
nana Tumor Registry (ATR), an
entity of the foundation that com-
piles this region’s cancer statis-
tics.

In an effort to promote more
education on their activities, the
foundation and the registry are
among sponsors of today’s and
tomorrow’s Tumor Registrars
Association of Louisiana (TRAL)
convention. The event
will take
place at the Lafayette Hilton and
Towers.

Steadley said that while the
ACS provides national estimates
on cancer, the ATR provides
“facts.” She added, “We have
over 18,000 cases of cancer cur-
rently and can show where these
patients were diagnosed, the type
of cancer, where they lived, how
long they lived, etc.”

For instance, the bar graph
accompanying this story shows
the number of cancer diagnoses
by parish during an eight-year
period of the ’80s. Michelle
Crouch, ATR director, said dif-
ficulties in totals mainly coin-
cide with overall populations
from parish to parish, but she
added that more cancer cases
probably are reflected in areas
such as St. Landry, which has a
higher percentage of senior citi-
zans.

Another ATR chart shows that
the ages of onset for about half
the cancer cases diagnosed in
Acadiana were from 60-79.

“Cancer, primarily, is a disease
of older people,” said Dr. John
Rainey, AMRF’s founder and di-
rector. But he added that a closer
study of age onsets is one offshoot
project now awaiting the regis-
try.

Rainey said studies also are
needed to determine why some of
the state’s cancer rates are “so high.” He
explained that the state’s and re-
region’s male lung cancer rates are
within the top 10 percent of na-
tional rates. Prostate cancer
rates among the region’s blacks
also are high, he said.

Now that the ATR has about a
decade’s worth of statistics,
Rainey said it is in a better posi-
tion to begin looking more closely
at apparent trends in cancer inci-
dence. The registry has not yet
had the opportunity to determine
whether environmental factors
may be causing some cancer
types, but he said a pending
grant hopefully will help to close
in on this region’s geographical
cancer trends more tightly.

Major topics of today’s and to-
morrow’s meeting include under-
standing how cancer affects
people’s lives, the development
of uniform stages of cancer re-
porting, quality control issues,
and the value and appropriate
format for annual reports.

Meeting speakers will include
Rosemary McKee, CTR, a Re-
gional Field Staff member of the
American College of Surgeons
(ACS) and oncology data manag-
er at Memorial Hospital in Chat-
tanooga, Tenn.; Susan Radovich,
CTR, a regional cancer program
consultant for the ACS and train-
ing analyst coordinator for train-
ing programs at the University of
San Francisco; and Susan Bou

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RN, OCN, clinical educator in oncology at Lafayette General Medical Center (LGMC). Rainey will open the meeting.

Fees for registration, which begins at 8:15 a.m. today, are $50 for TRAL members, $55 for non-members, and $20 for students.

Hosting the meeting, along with AMRC, are the ATR, LGMC, and Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center.