

IREDELL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Iredell County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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Thyroid Cancer in Iredell County

In March of 2018, the Iredell County Health Director, Jane Hinson, requested an assessment of the thyroid cancer incidence in Iredell County from the North Carolina Central Cancer Registry because the 5-year (2011-2015) age-adjusted incidence rate of thyroid cancers was statistically significantly greater than the state rate. Additional analyses were conducted by eight zip codes in the county and found that most of the cases lived in the two zip codes 28115 and 28117 at the time of diagnosis. Due to ongoing concerns, a follow-up assessment was requested to determine whether the observed number of thyroid cancer cases was statistically significantly greater than expected in the two specific zip codes of concern.

Standardized Incidence Ratios (SIRs) were then calculated by the Central Cancer Registry to compare the number of observed thyroid cancer cases to what would be expected in the two zip codes based on North Carolina cancer rates. The SIRs were calculated as the number of observed cases divided by the number of expected cases for the 22 year period (1995-2016) and the five year period (2012-2016). A 95 percent confidence interval was calculated for each SIR to determine statistical significance.

Based on the SIR analyses, the number of observed thyroid cancer cases in Iredell County and the two zip codes were statistically significantly greater than expected. This investigation cannot be used to determine the cause of the cancers or identify associations with any risk factors.

Yesterday, officials from the NC DHHS-Division of Public Health- Occupational & Environmental Epidemiology Branch, the NC DHHS- Central Cancer Registry and the Iredell County Health Department met with a concerned citizen and a researcher she has been working with at Duke University related to the incidence of thyroid cancer in Mooresville to discuss the results of the SIR analysis. It was determined that the Duke University research team plans to continue to collect additional information to assess the feasibility of a research study and the NC Central Cancer Registry will continue to identify cases and examine the available data. DHHS does not have enough data at the present time to call this a cancer cluster.

Those in attendance at the meeting are committed to collaboratively working together to investigate the incidence of elevated thyroid cancer in Iredell County and specifically in the two Mooresville zip codes.

If you have any further questions, please reach out to the Iredell County Health Department Public Information Officer at 704-924-4089 or megan.redford@co.iredell.nc.us

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