

State of Cherokee County's Health for Year 2007

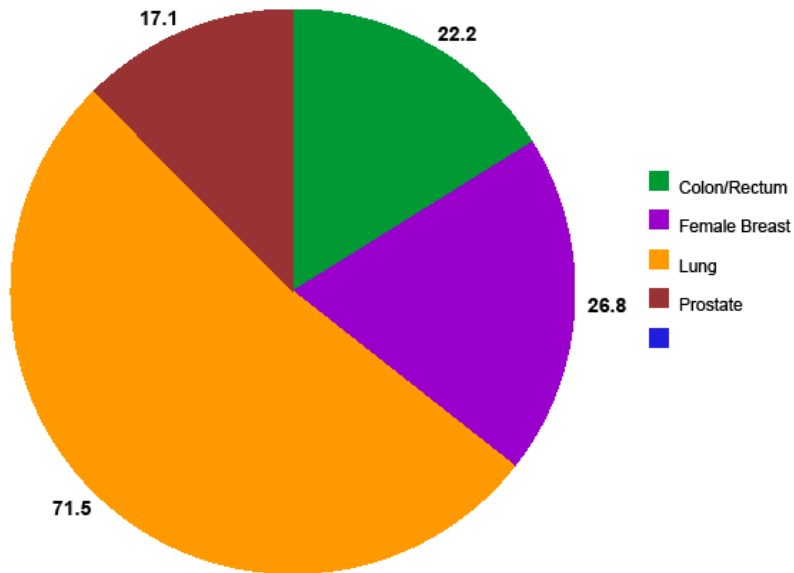


Cherokee County is North Carolina's westernmost county, located in the southern tip of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The county is bordered by the states of Tennessee and Georgia. Cherokee County is a small rural county with a population in 2006 of 26,309 according to the US Census Bureau. Cherokee County has 20.3% of the population between 0-18 years of age, 59.5% of the population between 18-65 years of age, and 20.2% are age 65 and over (U.S. Census 2005 Data). The per capita income for Cherokee County is \$15,814 (U.S. Census 1999 Data) which is considerably lower than the state of \$20,307. This could be due in part to the fact that only 73.3% of the Cherokee County population has obtained a high school diploma compared to the state rate of 78.1% (U.S. Census 2000 Data). The recent loss of industrial manufacturing has also affected the per capita income for Cherokee County. There are 15.1% of Cherokee County residents living below poverty level as compared to the state rate of 13.8% (US Census 2004 Data).

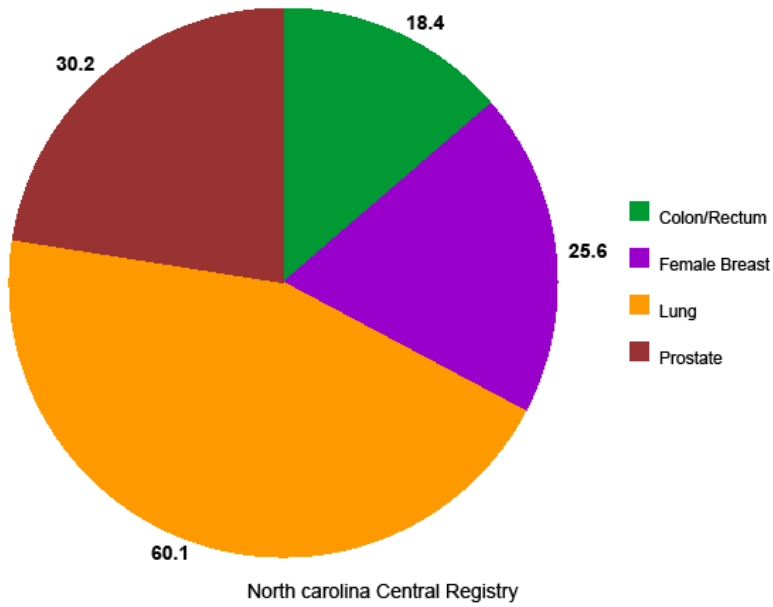
According to the N.C. State Center for Health Statistics/"NC County Trend Reports (combined 2000-2004 data), Cherokee County had a heart disease death rate of 232.4/100,000 population which is just below the state rate 233.9/100,000 population. Cherokee County's death rate caused by diabetes is 25.6/100,000 which is lower than the state's rate of 27.5/100,000 (N.C State Center for Health Statistics, "N.C. County Trend Reports"). The report combined 2000-2004 data. According to the same above mentioned resource, Cherokee County's unintentional injuries

(including motor vehicle deaths) resulted in a death rate of 73.3/100,000 versus the state which is 44.4 /100,000 population higher than any surrounding county: Clay – 67.0, Graham –62.8, Swain –66.7, Macon-53.1. According to the 2001-2005 data for 2006 County/State Report, Cherokee County's cancer rate is 201.5/100,000 compared to the state of 197.7 per 100,000 (N.C. Center for Health Statistics). According to the 2001-2005 data for 2006 County/State Report our cancer rate is 201.5/100,000 compared to the state rate of 197.7/100,000 (N.C. Center for Health Statistics).

2001-2005 County Data



2001-2005 State Data 100,00 population



North carolina Central Registry

The two pie graphs shown above are from the N.C. Central Cancer Registry. They show that Cherokee County has a higher rate of lung cancer and a lower rate of prostate cancer than the state.

Priority Issues Identified in 2004 Community Health Assessment

The priority issues identified in the 2004 Community Health Assessment were:

1. Programs and education to improve diet and exercise, thereby reducing chronic disease.
2. Affordable health care and prescription medication. Cherokee county needs greater access to affordable/indigent sick care to relieve the service burden of our hospital emergency department.
3. Addressing the limited number of jobs providing benefits.
4. Reducing domestic violence and child abuse.

New Initiatives

1. Cherokee County Health Department collaborated with Cherokee County Cooperative Extension Service to conduct a county employee wellness program.
2. The Health Educator also collaborated with Cherokee County Cooperative Extension to present a 12 week wellness program for a local manufacturing company.
3. Cherokee County Health Educator partnered with Cherokee County Cooperative Extension, and Cherokee County School System to address child obesity via school health fairs which included body mass index calculations for every student pre-K through 12th grade.

4. Cherokee County Health Educator implemented the Walk 'n Talk program. Students added physical activity to the beginning of the school day as they walked around the gym and socialized with friends.
5. Community partners in Murphy constructed a one and one half mile walking trail. River walk trail begins along the river, continues through the town and around the Health Department, and ends at a local elementary school.
6. Cherokee County Health Educator partnered with Cherokee County Cooperative Extension to offer nutritional classes for the senior adults at the County Senior Centers.

Progress on 2004 Health Issues

1. Obesity in Cherokee County continues to be a health concern for all ages. North Carolina ranks 17th in the U.S. in highest rate of overweight and obese adults (Trust for America's Health 2005 data). In Cherokee County and the surrounding region. 60.9 percent of adults are overweight or obese (NC State Center for Health Statistics, Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, MAHEC region Excluding Buncombe, 2006 data. According to the Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (2005 data), 25.8% of Cherokee County children ages 2-5 are overweight or obese. No data for children ages 5-18 who are overweight or obese is available.
2. Access to health care continues to be a critical issue in Cherokee County especially for our uninsured and underinsured population. Access to maternity

services has improved as our local hospital (Murphy Medical Center) has two full time ob/gyn physicians on staff. Access to orthopedic care in our area has also improved. We have an orthopedist on staff at our local hospital (MMC). (N.C. State Center for Health Statistics and N.C. County Trends Report).

3. Addressing the limited number of jobs providing benefits. It is difficult to research and find the number of workers with benefits. According to 2000 census, Cherokee County has 22.6% of the workers who are professionals which compared to the state of 31.2%. (N.C. Rural Economic Development Center's Rural Data Bank, 2007 data). More Cherokee County people are employed in manufacturing and production and fewer in sales than N.C. as a whole (same source as above). However the average wage for manufacturing is significantly lower in Cherokee County than North Carolina. Cherokee County has a wage of \$29, 121 and North Carolina has a wage of \$42,703 (NC. Employment Commission, 2205 as cited as source above). No new jobs are available especially manufacturing. There has been a significant drop in the amount of house construction leaving construction workers with no jobs.

4. Child maltreatment reports investigated and substantiated remain higher than the state. In Cherokee County in 2005, 99.0 cases per 1,000 children were investigated compared to 53.6 per 1,000 statewide (Action for children 2006 county data card). In Cherokee County, 28.3 per 1,000 children had maltreatment substantiated as opposed to 9.8 per 1,000 in the state (same source from above).

NEW AND EMERGING ISSUES

1. Cherokee County Health Department staff turnover in critical positions to coordinate community activities in an effort to address health concerns. For example, the only Public Health Educator has remained vacant for over one year.
2. Cherokee County has 30% of expectant mothers who smoke during pregnancy compared to the 13.2% state rate (N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, "N.C. county Trends Report", combined 200-2004 data).
3. In 2005 our county had a back log of 1200 septic permit applications which caused an 8 month waiting time for residents and developers which persisted into 2006. As of November 2007, the backlog stands at 400 pending applications. A significant portion of this back log has been addressed by the Environmental Health Staff during this present decrease in house construction.