

OPERATION WIPE OUT: Cervical Cancer in Alabama

AUTHORS: Nancy Wright, Cancer Prevention and Control Division Director and Aretha Bracy, ASCR Program Director

SUMMARY

The goal of the Alabama Statewide Cancer Registry (ASCR) is to collect and provide high-quality data through program coordination and external partnerships. These data target specific areas for screening, promoting research activities, and implementing key evidence-based strategies for state planning. The ASCR collaborates with the Cancer Division's OPERATION WIPE OUT to eliminate cervical cancer in Alabama.

CHALLENGES

- Alabama is consistently among the top five states for the highest rates of cervical cancer. (USCS, 2022)
- Alabama is consistently higher in cervical cancer incidence and mortality when compared to the U.S. (USCS, 2022); (CDC National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, 2022)
- Alabama's human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination coverage is lower than the nation's. (CDC National Immunization Surveys, NIS for Teens, 2022)

SOLUTION

Alabama is the first state in the nation to announce a statewide effort to eliminate cervical cancer. OPERATION WIPE OUT raises awareness about HPV vaccination and cervical cancer prevention and facilitates access to vaccination, screening, and follow-up treatment. ASCR has provided cancer data maps to inform and empower clinicians, partners, and citizens. OPERATION WIPE OUT is a partnership bringing together champions from across Alabama's public, private, academic, and non-profit sectors to save women's lives.

RESULTS

- OPERATION WIPE OUT partners organized a 2-day cervical cancer summit. At the summit, 65 primary care health professionals and public health leaders across Alabama formed the basis for a statewide plan to expand access to lifesaving cervical cancer prevention for women and girls. ASCR provided county-specific maps to guide the plan's development.
- ASCR's data report engaged physicians at the summit. A variety of individuals representing academic, non-profit, public health, health care settings (physicians), schools (teachers), retirees, and survivors participated in OPERATION WIPE OUT. Partners included the University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of South Alabama Mitchell Cancer Institute, TogetHER for Health, Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, Alabama Comprehensive Cancer Control program, Huntsville Health System, and Tuskegee University.
- ASCR also provided maps at regional meetings. Maps are a very effective way to communicate data to interest holders.
- Partners were frustrated with not being able to target cancer prevention and control at the community level since data were not available at sub-county levels.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

ASCR will continue:

- Monitoring cervical cancer late-stage diagnosis, incidence, and mortality to inform and measure the progress of OPERATION WIPE OUT efforts.
- Updating county-level maps and providing data to interest holders.
- Monitoring Alabama's cervical cancer rates compared to the U.S.

The ASCR will continue to partner with OPERATION WIPE OUT and provide cervical cancer data to guide the group's future efforts in Alabama.