

A Decade of Collaboration Leads to Published Manuscripts Using TCR Data

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SUMMARY

The Tennessee Cancer Registry (TCR) serves a population of more than 7 million residents. TCR's goal is to collect accurate and complete data and promote their use for research. Many peer-reviewed studies have been published using TCR data. But internal use of TCR data for scientific research is problematic for many reasons, including lack of staff. Establishing collaborative relationships with external research and educational staff has permitted TCR staff to participate in scientific studies that have led to published, peer-reviewed manuscripts.

CHALLENGES

- Tennessee has ranked in the top 50th percentile among all U.S. states for population for many years; therefore, the TCR collects data on and serves a large population.
- The TCR lacked epidemiologic staff, other than the TCR director, since 2008. In May 2022, the TCR hired an epidemiologist, supported through state appropriations.
- Prior to 2018, the TCR director was responsible for directing the TCR and the Tennessee Comprehensive Cancer Control Program. Consequently, the TCR director—the only epidemiologist on staff at the time—could devote little time to TCR data use.

SOLUTION

The TCR director sought collaborations with external members of the research and educational communities to complete studies using TCR data. This included hosting unpaid interns so these individuals could complete study course requirements. In more recent years, the Tennessee Department of Health ("Department") established a centralized internship program, funded strictly through state appropriations, which has enabled the Department to hire interns on a temporary basis and assign them to Department programs with willing mentors, such as the TCR.

RESULTS

First, a collaboration arose about a decade ago when the TCR director participated as an advisory committee member for the Master of Science in Professional Science program at Middle Tennessee State University. The TCR director has hosted 16 interns from this program over the last 8 years. This has enabled the TCR director to begin research on lung cancer survival in Tennessee.

Second, the TCR director established a collaboration with an assistant professor, originally located at East Tennessee State University's School of Public Health and now located at the National Institutes of Health. Collaboration with this researcher has led to seven peer-reviewed publications since November 2020, with the TCR director as a co-author.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

These collaborations have successfully led to many publications. Collaborations such as these continue to provide opportunities to get TCR data out in print to highlight the registry's work.