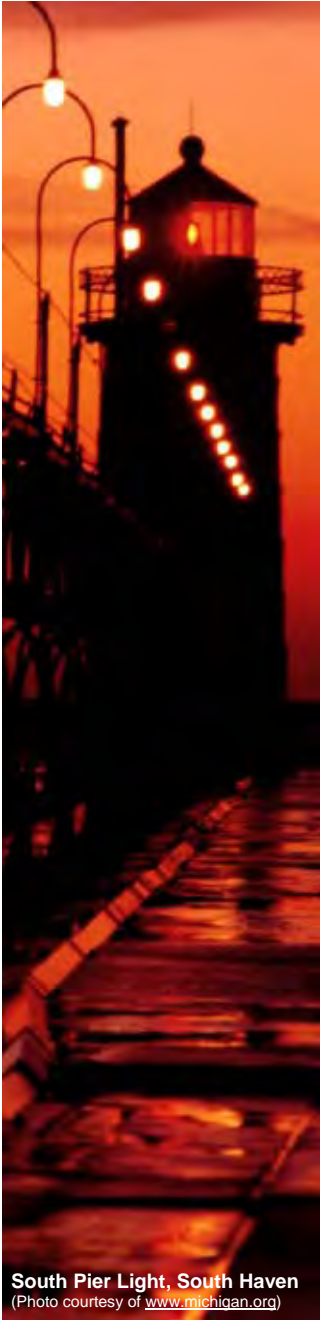


Cancer Health Disparities



South Pier Light, South Haven
(Photo courtesy of www.michigan.org)

Cancer affects people of all racial and ethnic groups. The American Cancer Society estimates that 565,650 Americans were expected to die of the disease in 2008. However, a close look at cancer rates for specific populations reveals some significant differences, and these differences have been described as health disparities.

The National Cancer Institute defines “cancer health disparities” as “differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of cancer and related adverse health conditions that exist among specific populations groups in the United States.”

These population groups may be characterized by gender, age, ethnicity, education, income, social class, disability, geographic location or sexual orientation. Research has shown that individuals in underserved populations are more likely than individuals in the overall U.S. population to:

- be diagnosed with, and die from, preventable cancers;
- be diagnosed with late-stage disease for cancers that are detectable at an early stage through screening;
- receive either no treatment or treatment that does not meet currently accepted standards of care;
- die of cancers that are generally curable; and/or
- suffer from terminal cancers in the absence of adequate pain control and other palliative care.¹

¹ National Cancer Institute. Available online at www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/disparities.

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Many of the differences in cancer incidence and mortality rates among racial and ethnic groups may be due to factors associated with socioeconomic status (SES) rather than ethnicity. SES in particular appears to play a major role in the differences in cancer incidence and mortality rates, risk factors, and screening prevalence among racial and ethnic minorities. Moreover, studies have found that SES, more than race, predicts the likelihood of a group's access to education, certain occupations, and health insurance, as well as income level and living conditions - all of which are associated with someone's chance of developing and surviving cancer.¹

Detailed data on cancer health disparities is addressed in each goal area in Michigan's Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan.



Chapel Rock at Pictured Rocks near Munising (Photo courtesy of www.michigan.org)