

2008 Ten Leading Causes of Morbidity (hospitalization) for Wilkes County and NC Source: NC SCHS, 12/10

Wilkes County Rank	Cause of Morbidity	North Carolina Rank
1	Heart Disease	2
2	Digestive System Diseases	3
3	Pregnancy and Childbirth	1
4	Injuries and Poisoning	5
5	Symptoms, Signs and Ill defined conditions	6
6	Respiratory Diseases (excluding Pneumonia/influenza and COPD)	7
7	Other Diagnoses (including mental disorders)	4
8	Genitourinary Diseases	8
9	Septicemia	
9 (tie)	Pneumonia/Influenza	10
10	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)	9

New Initiatives/Changes in the County

The Wilkes County Health Department, Wilkes Regional Medical Center, and Wilkes Smart Start have formed a Healthy Mothers, Health Babies Coalition, which will focus on improving maternal and infant health outcomes.

The Fitness and Nutrition for Disease Prevention Task Force is currently working with the School Health Advisory Council on a policy limiting access to unhealthy foods at school through classroom celebrations/parties, rewards, fundraising, snacks, and concessions. This policy will be presented to the WCS Board of Education in the Spring of 2011.

You Quit, Two Quit is a program funded by the Health and Wellness Trust Fund which focuses on screening and treating pregnant and postpartum women for tobacco use as well as referring them to the NC Quitline.

The Wilkes County Health Department received its American Diabetes Association (ADA) Education Recognition Certification on July 1, 2010. This means the ADA assures that this educational program meets the National Standards for Diabetes Self-Management Education Programs. High quality education is necessary for effectively managing Diabetes.

A Susan G. Komen grant administered through the Health Department covers the costs of mammograms for uninsured and underinsured women in Wilkes County.

Wilkes Circles of Care is working to end poverty in Wilkes.

Resources in Wilkes (Health Promoting Policies, Walking Trails, and Built Environment in Regards to Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Tobacco Free Environments)

Wilkes County Schools and Wilkes Community College are both 100 % Tobacco Free. Wilkes County Government buildings, cars, etc. are Tobacco Free. Following the passage of House Bill 2 all bars and restaurants in the state are Tobacco Free. Wilkes Regional Medical Center is a Tobacco Free Campus. The Yadkin River Greenway, the Park at River’s Edge, Cub Creek Park, Wilkes Community College, W. Kerr Scott Trails, Stone Mountain Trails, the Wilkes YMCA, and Millers Creek, Mulberry, and CB Eller Elementary Schools all provide facilities which can be used by community members to engage in physical activity, most are available free of charge. The Wilkes County Health Department’s ADA certified Diabetes Self Management Education program, and Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) program provide assistance managing Diabetes and other chronic diseases including weight management. Wilkes County Schools have adopted the In-school Prevention of Obesity and Disease program utilized by PE teachers K-8.

Needed Resources:

Additional Tobacco Free public places, completion of the proposed additions to Yadkin River Greenway which would connect the currently finished sections, Joint Use Agreements with all Wilkes County Schools allowing community access to school facilities outside of school hours, creation of built environment or the integration of health promoting policies and environments in all aspects of community planning, broader community focus on prevention and early intervention.

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2010 Wilkes County State of the County’s Health Report

December 6, 2010

In December of 2009, following the 2009 Community Health Assessment data collection period, the Wilkes Healthy Carolinians Council called a special meeting- a Health Summit, to review the findings. Based on primary and secondary data collection and the opinion of community members and stakeholders, the following four priority areas were selected to be addressed during the 2010-2014 time period:

- **Access to Health Care:** Objective: Increase the number of uninsured Wilkes County residents accessing healthcare by 60 percent. To serve on this task force or for more information contact Armando Limon at 651-7386 or alimon@wilkescounty.net.
- **Health Promotion (Substance Abuse Prevention):** Objective: Wilkes County will see a reduction in total number of deaths as a result of unintentional poisoning by 20 percent for the year of 2010 as compared to data from 2009. To serve on this task force or for more information contact Fred Brason at 667-8100 or fbrason@projectlazarus.org.
- **Chronic Disease (Fitness and Nutrition for Disease Prevention):** Objective: By 2014 there will be a decrease in childhood obesity rates as defined by middle school children over the 85th percentile by 5 percent. To serve on this task force or for more information contact Jared Belk at 651-7478 or jbelk@wilkescounty.net.
- **Mental Health (Access to Services):** Objective: Reduce the number of deaths from intentional self harm (suicides) by 10 percent. To serve on this task force or for more information contact co-chairs Christy Pruess at prueschr@smokymountaincenter.com or Glenda Andrews at gandrews@bariumsprings.org.

This report details progress made to date on each of the above listed priorities as well as outlines emerging issues, morbidity and mortality data, new initiatives, and resources within Wilkes County.

Priority One: Access to Care

Progress Made

The Task Force Chair continues to work with private physicians, Wilkes Regional Medical Center, community centers, and the Health Department to ensure proper availability of primary care for the uninsured. The hospital provides prescription drug assistance. By having these agencies working together, uninsured Wilkes County residents can continue to have proper ways to seek primary care, specialty care, and outpatient services. Several ways the task force continues to promote these services is through health fairs, billboards, urgent care, and at the free clinic which is open the second Saturday of each month.

Change in Data

In 2009, 4,800 of 12,000 (40 percent) uninsured patients were being served through Access to Care/Care Connection services. To date, an additional 400 clients are receiving services, for a total of 5,200 of 12,000 (43.3 percent). The objective is to serve 60 percent or 7,200 of these patients by 2014.

Priority Two: Substance Abuse Prevention

Progress Made

Through grant funding, one drug diversion officer has been hired by the Sheriff's Department. Through collaboration with the Wilkes Chronic Pain Initiative, there have been meetings between our County Medical Director and about half (35) of the physicians from local practices on safer opioid prescribing. The Substance Abuse Task Force (SATF) has continued to encourage all prescribers in Wilkes County to use the state's Controlled Substances Reporting System (CSRS, or prescription monitoring program). With 70% of prescribers registered, Wilkes County has by far the highest rate of utilization of the CSRS in the state (average 20%). SATF held drug take back days on March 17, September 25, and October 30, 2010 in coordination with Wilkes Sheriff's Office, Wilkesboro and North Wilkesboro Police Departments. A total of over 10,000 units of pharmaceutical medications were received and destroyed. The SATF Chair sits on the Crimestoppers Board and funding has been received from them to install a permanent prescription drug drop off site in the North Wilkesboro Police Department. The SATF is seeking additional funding to establish a drop off in the Sheriff's Office. Wilkes Project Lazarus has received naloxone opioid rescue medication, prepared the kits and created a database and protocols for tracking forms, referrals and conducting follow-up. A local pharmacy will dispense the naloxone kits and complete the statutory record keeping requirements. The case manager of the Chronic Pain Initiative in the emergency department of Wilkes Regional Medical Center continues to coordinate care for presenting patients with chronic pain and substance abuse. Posters and billboards have been used to increase awareness about the importance of locking up medications. Prescription drug awareness classes are being held in Wilkes County Schools. The SATF has continued to increase awareness through partnerships with community organizations, state and national organizations, health fairs, news releases, and radio interviews and public service announcements.

Change in Data

In 2009, Wilkes County had a total of 31 deaths as a result of unintentional poisoning (over dose). To date (December 1, 2010) Wilkes has had 10 deaths with 3 pending from unintentional, accidental poisonings. This is a 58.6 percent reduction.

Priority Three: Fitness and Nutrition for Disease Prevention

Progress Made

Wilkes County Schools have successfully implemented the IsPOD (In-school Prevention of Obesity and Disease) program. School staff were trained in both the Fitnessgram program and SPARK curriculum in August of 2010. The Task Force is continuing to work through the National Association of City and County Health Official's Leadership for Healthy Communities initiative in order to promote HEAL (Healthy Eating and Active Living) policies, one of which is a Comprehensive Nutrition Standards policy addressing foods in schools. In addition the Task Force is partnering with Wilkes County Schools to create Joint Use Agreements, which allow community members access to school facilities outside of school hours.

Change in Data

New data is currently being collected through the IsPOD program. A more thorough analysis of the most recent data collection (Spring of 2010) shows 49.8 percent of middle school students being overweight or obese (above the 85 percentile).

Priority Four: Mental Health Access

Progress Made

In response to a need to address an inordinate number of mental health involuntary commitment cases in Wilkes County, a Mental Health Services Task Force was organized in early 2010. The task force is focused on prevention and access to services and recently reviewed their goals. Goals include: 1) **Community Education** – Develop strategies to keep the public, consum-

ers, provider agencies and legislative committees informed of local services. 2) **Integration of Physical and Mental Health for Proper Diagnosis** – Develop strategies to improve systems so that consumers get proper coordination of services between physical and mental health providers, resulting in proper diagnosis for presenting problems. 3) **Collaboration of Agencies** – Develop strategies that improve collaboration of providers so that consumers get the best possible care. A sub-committee was formed to investigate concerns that Wilkes consumers were not getting a fair number of involuntary commitment placements in state hospitals. The Involuntary Commitment Sub-Committee found that Wilkes residents were getting placements based on availability and that State hospital beds were very limited which made it difficult to get placements. This sub-committee is working to find solutions to issues surrounding the long hospital emergency room visits, options to divert unnecessary involuntary commitments, and plans for collaboration between consumers, agencies, law enforcement, and the judicial system that best meet the consumers' needs and remain in compliance within the legal system.

Change in Data

In 2007 there were 16 suicide deaths in Wilkes County. There was a 50 percent reduction in suicide deaths between 2007 and 2008, with 8 suicide deaths occurring in Wilkes County in 2008. This is the latest data available.

Emerging Issues

The unemployment rate in Wilkes has remained significantly higher than the state rate over the past year. The unemployment rate for the county reached a record high in May of 2010 at 13.7 percent, but has since dropped as of September 2010 to 11.5 percent compared to 9.6 percent at the state level.

As of January 2, 2010 House Bill 2, the law prohibiting smoking in restaurants, bars, and other certain public places has provided smoke free dining for all county residents. In addition, as of August 2010 Wilkes Community College became a Tobacco Free Campus.

The passage of the Healthy Youth Act has allowed and in fact requires that Health Education teachers beginning in seventh grade, include in their instruction, education about the effectiveness and safety of all FDA approved methods of reducing the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases as well as the effectiveness and safety of all FDA approved contraceptive methods of preventing pregnancy.

Since January 2010 the Wilkes Department of Social Services has been made aware of multiple newborns who at birth have tested positive for some type of prescription pain medication and have had significant withdrawals. Data is currently being collected to determine the number of babies affected and if this is an increase from previous years. Plans are in motion to collaborate with area organizations and the medical community to intervene and prevent.

Morbidity and Mortality Data

2008 Ten Leading Causes of Death for Wilkes County and North Carolina (all ages) Source: NC SCHS, 12/10

Wilkes County Rank	Cause of Death	North Carolina Rank
1	Cancer	2
2	Diseases of the Heart	1
3	Cerebrovascular disease	4
4	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	3
5	All other unintentional injuries	5
6	Diabetes mellitus	7
7	Alzheimer's disease	6
8	Influenza and Pneumonia	8
9	Motor vehicle injuries	10
10	Septicemia	
	Nephritis, nephritic syndrome, nephrosis	9