

**Morbidity and Mortality Data**

2009 Ten Leading Causes of Death for Wilkes County and North Carolina (all ages) (Source: NC SCHS, 11/11)

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

2009 Ten Leading Causes of Morbidity (hospitalization) for Wilkes County and NC (Source: NC SCHS, 11/11)

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

**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, and the Wilkes YMCA provide facilities which can be used by community members to engage in physical activity, most are available free of charge. In addition, a Joint Use Agreement with Wilkes County Schools allows community access to school facilities outside of school hours at Millers Creek, Mulberry, CB Eller, Traphill, Boomer Ferguson, Mt. Pleasant, and Ronda Clingman Elementary Schools. 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, 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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# 2011 Wilkes County State of the County's Health Report

December 5, 2011

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](mailto: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. To serve on this task force or for more information contact Fred Brason at 667-8100 or [fbrason@projectlazarus.org](mailto: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 85<sup>th</sup> percentile by 5 percent. To serve on this task force or for more information contact Jared Belk at 651-7478 or [jbelk@wilkescounty.net](mailto: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](mailto:prueschr@smokymountaincenter.com) or Glenda Andrews at [gandrews@bariumsprings.org](mailto: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**

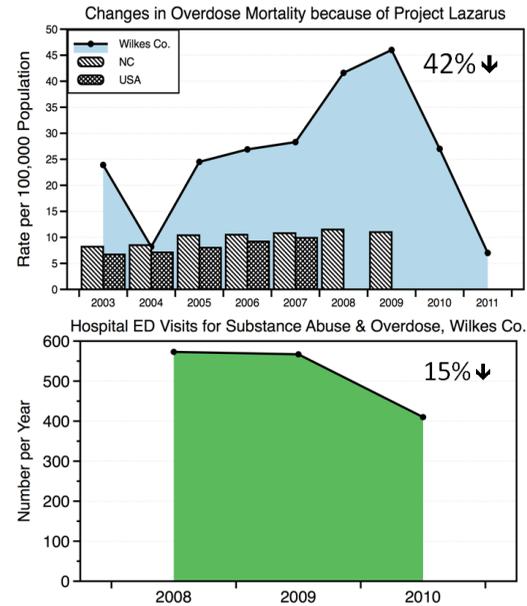
**Progress Made:** The Task Force Chair continues to work with private physicians, Wilkes Regional Medical Center, community centers, and the Health Department to ensure proper availability of primary care for the uninsured. The hospital provides prescription drug assistance. By these agencies working together, uninsured Wilkes County residents can continue to have proper ways to seek primary care, specialty care, and outpatient services. The task force continues to promote these services through health fairs, billboards, urgent care, and at the free clinic which is open the second Saturday of each month. In 2011 the task force implemented a new initiative, to provide free dental care. The goal was to partner with the Wilkes County Dental Clinic and the Health Foundation to provided free dental care for the uninsured through free dental clinics.



**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 900 clients (400 in 2010 and 500 in 2011) are receiving services, for a total of 5,700 of 12,000 (47.5 percent). The objective is to serve 60 percent or 7,200 of these patients by 2014. One dental clinic was offered in 2011 and 40 uninsured patients received free dental care. Over \$7,000 in free dental care was donated.

### **Priority Two: Substance Abuse Prevention**

**Progress Made:** In response to the 3rd highest drug overdose death rate, Wilkes County, NC initiated a public health prescription opioid overdose prevention program that includes supply reduction, demand reduction, diversion control and harm reduction. The intervention includes: 1) community coalition building, 2) epidemiologic monitoring, 3) primary overdose prevention efforts, 4) naloxone prescribing to community members, and 5) program evaluation. Primary prevention efforts included: one-on-one physician education, pill take-back days, fixed disposal sites, community awareness, expanded access to drug treatment, and other measures. Backed by the NC Medical Board, the first implementation of Project Lazarus in Wilkes County has been evaluated and published. For the full article visit <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1526-4637.2011.01128.x/abstract>. We now work in more than 30 counties. Project Lazarus has facilitated overdose prevention in Wilkes in collaboration with the Health Department, law enforcement, schools, clinicians, local hospital, and faith community. In the past three years: overdose deaths decreased over 40%; drug-related hospital emergency department (ED) visits decreased 15%; the number of prescriptions for controlled substances stabilized; a new substance abuse facility treats over 250 patients monthly; the hospital changed its ED prescribing policies to limit opioid prescriptions; one-on-one clinical pain management education was conducted with nearly all physicians; the percent of Wilkes physicians registered on the Controlled Substances Reporting System (CSRS) increased to 70%; overdose prevention is taught in all county schools; the sheriff provides a 24/7 drug drop-off site for unused or expired medications; and doctors provide pain patients and drug users with free overdose reversal kits. Other partners include: Community Care Networks of NC (NCCN) and the NC Hospital Association for the Chronic Pain Initiative statewide rollout, the Division of Public Health, CSRS, Office of Chief Medical Examiner, NC DETECT hospital ED data, Governor's Institute for community engagement and physician CME's, Board of Pharmacy and State Bureau of Investigation for pharmacist CE. Project Lazarus has begun to reduce the burden of opioid overdose mortality through a novel and comprehensive community-wide approach.



**Change in Data:** In 2009, Wilkes County had 46 (per 100,000) deaths as a result of unintentional poisoning (over dose). Deaths drastically decreased in 2010 to 24.5 (per 100,000) and to date (December 2, 2011) for 2011 Wilkes has had 7 (per 100,000) deaths from unintentional, accidental poisonings.

### **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 in August of 2010. The Task Force is continuing to work through the 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 has partnered with Wilkes County Schools to create Joint Use Agreements, which allow community members access to school facilities outside of school hours. In conjunction with the School System, the Health Department received a grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust for \$151,400 to upgrade playground facilities at all 13 elementary schools over a 3-year period. Boomer-Ferguson, Traphill, Ronda-Clingman, and Mt. Pleasant were the first four schools to receive funding. The second set of four schools that are scheduled to receive the funding are Millers Creek, Mountain View, Roaring River, and C.C. Wright. These four schools are scheduled to have their community parks completed by fall 2012. The Task Force also worked toward developing a nutrition standards policy that would address outside food sales, vending, fundraising, and concession sales in our schools. A work group was formed to continue to work on developing a solid nutrition standards policy. While an actual policy was not approved this year, a huge stride towards making everyone aware of our need for healthy food choices was certainly a positive result. As a result of this work, a nutrition standards task force has been developed to include principals from our schools as well as the child nutrition director to work further towards developing a policy.

**Change in Data:** New data is currently being collected through the IsPOD program. To date around 25% of K-8th Grade Students have been tested (Fall of 2011) with approximately 56% having a healthy body mass index.

### **Priority Four: Mental Health Access**

**Progress Made:** The Mental Health Services Task Force was organized in early 2010. The task force is focused on prevention and access to services. Goals include: 1) **Community Education** – Develop strategies to keep the public, consumers, provider agencies and legislative committees informed of local services. The Task Force has established four groups to implement the goals. They will: identify and seek funding for advertising and printing, collect provider info and design brochures to be placed in the community, create a speakers bureau for consumer awareness events, lunch and learns, employee fairs, etc., establish a training plan to train volunteers to speak about services available in the community, and schedule speakers to present at events identified. A draft brochure is in process and the committee is seeking info from all providers in Wilkes County. 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. Mountain View Medical Center had a mental health provider through two combined grants which covered the salary for this position, one through Northwest Community Care and the other through KBR. Mountain View decided they could not continue this due to the program not being sustainable from just charges to the insurance companies. Many clients being seen were without insurance. Boomer and West Wilkes Medical Center fund a clinician via a grant from Kate B Reynolds. Patients are seen on Tuesday at Boomer Medical Center and Thursday at West Wilkes Medical Center and at the Health Department two other week days. 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 (IVC) placements in state hospitals. The IVC 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 IVCs, 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. Membership of this committee has increased to include hospital personnel and law enforcement along with numerous mental health and social service type agency representatives. Data trends, provided by Project Lazarus, have been reviewed by the committee. Several law enforcement officers completed Crisis Intervention Training provided by Smokey Mountain Center. A "Wilkes County IVC Flow Sheet" was developed to track IVC info in the emergency department of Wilkes Regional Medical Center. This form will identify wait times, contacts made related to assessment and commitment processes, etc. to give a base line measurement for identified outcomes. The North Wilkesboro Police Chief has implemented a new process that requires his officers to only sit with North Wilkesboro town residents in the ED awaiting commitment. Talks have been re-initiated with the hospital about funding an off duty police officer to be stationed in the ED.

**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 few years. The unemployment rate for the county was 11.5 percent in September of 2011 compared to a state rate of 10.5 for the same month. Not only does this impact take home pay, but also the number of individuals covered by employer provided health insurance coverage.
- New River Behavioral Healthcare has ceased operations and been "replaced" by Daymark Recovery Systems. It is undetermined at this time what changes will occur in services previously provided by New River but it is anticipated that some services will not continue. In addition, the financial repercussions for the county are still not fully known.
- Statewide, a reduction in funding for public health and other human service agencies and services have decreased the availability of services and assistance for needy families. Low socioeconomic status is directly related to poorer health outcomes.

### **New Initiatives/Changes in the County**

- The Wilkes County Health Department will move its American Diabetes Association (ADA) Certified Education Program off site, to the Medical Arts Complex in early 2012. This partnership with WRMC will create a more patient friendly location, with more space, and easier access.
- Wilkes County Schools and other community agencies are working to implement a new program through the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Campaign of NC called WISE (Working to Institutionalize Sex Education). This will ensure the requirements of the Healthy Youth Act and NC Essential Standards are met.
- Wilkes County Schools will gather data on all students K-8 during this school year (both Fall and Spring) using Fitnessgram to assess physical fitness including BMI.
- The Health Department, Town of Wilkesboro, Master Gardeners, Cooperative Extension and other community agencies created a Community Garden located in Cub Creek Park during the summer of 2011. This will be an ongoing initiative initially funded in part by Leadership for Healthy Communities in order to promote HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) Policies.
- Wal-Mart has created a breastfeeding room for customers to utilize while shopping. Breastfeeding is linked to improved health outcomes for both baby and mom.
- The state of NC received a Community Transformation Grant from the CDC for \$7.4 million, reoccurring for 5 years. \$400,000/year for five years will come to our Public Health Incubator region to create policies to impact healthy eating, physical activity, and chronic disease management.