

Morbidity and Mortality Data

2010 Ten Leading Causes of Death for Wilkes County and North Carolina (all ages) (Source: NC SCHS, 11/12)

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

2010 Ten Leading Causes of Morbidity (hospitalization) for Wilkes County and NC (Source: NC SCHS, 11/12)

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

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, Mountain View, Roaring River, C.C. Wright, 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 implemented the WISE (Working to Institutionalize Sexuality Education) Initiative.

Needed Resources:

Additional Tobacco Free public places, a Wilkes County Schools District Wide Healthy Foods Policy (to address foods served outside of the cafeteria), 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.

Visit us on Facebook or on the web.



Phone: 651-7450

Fax: 651-7472



2012 Wilkes County State of the County's Health Report

December 3, 2012

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 2010-2013 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. 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 Ann Absher at 651-7450 or aabsher@wilkescounty.net.

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, Wilkes County Health Department, and Care Connection Pharmacy to ensure proper availability of primary care for the uninsured. Through this collaboration, uninsured Wilkes County residents can continue to have proper ways to seek primary care, specialty care, outpatient services, and prescriptions drugs. These services are being promoted through health fairs, billboards, urgent cares, and at the free clinic. A new initiative was implemented in 2011, for the purpose of providing free dental care through dental clinics. The Wilkes Public Health Dental Clinic and the Health Foundation have been instrumental in this initiative since the beginning. The School of Dentistry at UNC-Chapel Hill has joined as a new partner this year.

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 1,430 clients are receiving services, for a total of 6,230 of 12,000 (51 percent). The objective is to serve 60 percent by 2014. Two free dental clinics have been offered and over \$15,000 in free dental care has been donated.

Priority Two: Substance Abuse Prevention

Progress Made: Top opioids implicated in unintentional poisonings (accidental over dose deaths) include fentanyl, hydrocodone, methadone, and oxycodone; heroin is rarely suspected in overdose deaths. The average age of death is in the late 30s, and decedents have considerable comorbid health conditions, including respiratory, circulatory, and metabolic disorders. Those who are dying are county residents who use opioids for both medical and nonmedical reasons and exceeded their physiologic tolerance, either directly or in combination with other licit or illicit substances.

At the center of Project Lazarus is the understanding that communities are ultimately responsible for their own health and that active participation from a coalition of community partners is required for a successful public health campaign. There are many community-based organizations responsible for responding to the overdose problem in Wilkes County. Community activation describes the concrete actions required to bring communities together to develop a health promotion scheme and to build long-term social capital. The Project Lazarus model is based on previous research on community activation for health promotion, which indicates that the following organizations are the most important for successful public health campaigns: health department, schools, governmental agencies, hospitals, primary care clinical practices, churches, and newspapers; the following organizations have also been identified as having a role in health promotion in nonurban areas: television stations, health-related nonprofits, substance abuse treatment centers, and colleges.

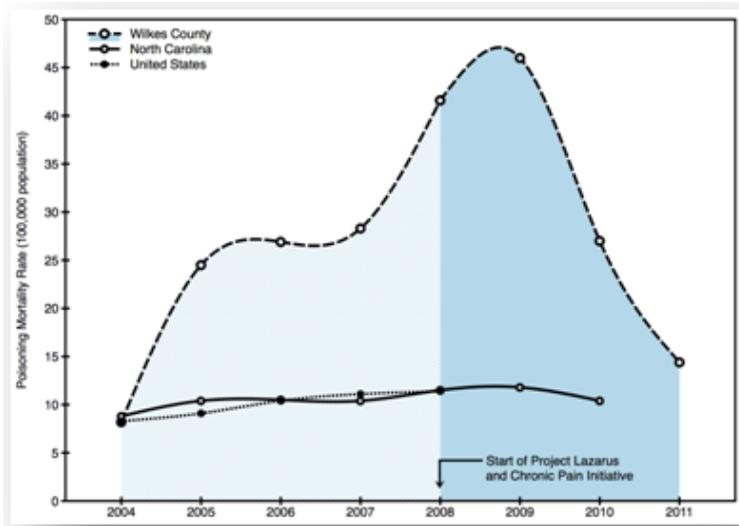
As a result of the heightened community awareness, activation, and community-building activities, many organizations are now engaged in responding to the overdose epidemic in Wilkes County. A central community organizer holds positions as part of Project Lazarus, the Chronic Pain Initiative, and the Substance Abuse Task Force and is responsible for coordinating overdose prevention efforts and minimizing duplication. Developments from one group are disseminated to others, and major community-wide decisions are brought before each of the advisory boards. The community boards have ongoing engagement in the prevention efforts in Wilkes as they review and evaluate results of interventions, making adjustments to program elements when necessary. In this manner, the community boards are active in dictating the direction of change that they would like to see and have shown sustainability beyond the initial charges when they were convened.

Change in Data: The Wilkes County unintentional poisoning mortality rate (primarily from drug overdoses) was quadruple that of North Carolina's (46.6 vs 11.0 state mortality rate per 100,000 population per year) in 2009 and due almost exclusively to prescription opioid pain relievers. [1] The overdose death rate dropped 69% in two years after the start of Project Lazarus and the Chronic Pain Initiative, 2009-2011, the last year of confirmed data. * Reference Pain Medicine 2011; 12: S77-S85 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Priority Three: Fitness and Nutrition for Disease Prevention

Progress Made: Wilkes County Schools implemented the IsPOD (In-school Prevention of Obesity and Disease) program during the 2010-2011 school year. The program ended this school year due to funding cuts at the state level. Grades K-8 will continue to collect BMI data and test physical fitness using the IsPOD model or using the criteria set forth by the President's fitness program, President's Challenge. The schools will continue to assess the data and send the information home to parents.

The Task Force is continuing to work with the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) toward developing a Comprehensive Nutrition Standards Policy addressing foods in schools. Representatives from the Health Department met with Dr. Marty Hemric, the new Superintendent of Wilkes County Schools, to discuss the importance of nutrition standards addressing a la carte, classroom rewards, concession food sales, and fundraisers within our schools. We will continue to work with Wilkes County Schools to further develop the standards.



This year saw the completion of 4 additional community parks or upgrades to facilities located at Millers Creek, Mountain View, Roaring River, and C.C. Wright Elementary Schools. This was a result of the Joint Use Agreement (JUA) that the Task Force partnered with Wilkes County Schools to create. The JUA allows community members access to outdoor elementary school facilities outside of school hours. Funding for the parks is provided by a grant received from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust for \$151,400 to upgrade elementary school playground facilities over a 3-year period. Boomer-Ferguson, Traphill, Ronda-Clingman, and Mt. Pleasant were the first four schools to receive funding. The final phase began in 2012-2013 with Mulberry, C.B. Eller, North Wilkesboro, Wilkesboro, and Moravian Falls receiving funding this school year for their community parks.

Change in Data: In 2009 50.5% of Wilkes County School Middle School students (grades 6-8) were at a healthy weight. The most recent data available is from the Fall of 2011. Only 24% of Middle School students were tested. Of those 44.6% were at a healthy weight.

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: 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. The committee has completed a consumer/provider brochure to be distributed electronically and in public places. Committee members were given assignments for distribution and are currently working on a power point presentation for their speaker's bureau to take to the community on easy access of services. They are also working on a poster that has a tear off contact number for consumers needing mental health help. They also are seeking funding for printing expenses. 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.

An Involuntary Commitment (IVC) subcommittee was formed and found that Wilkes residents are getting placements in State hospitals based on availability and that State hospital beds are very limited. 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.

Change in Data: In 2009 there were 14 deaths due to intentional self harm in Wilkes County. In 2010 there were 12 deaths due to intentional self harm. 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 10.1 percent in October of 2012 compared to a state rate of 8.8 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.
- 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 (WCHD) has moved it's American Diabetes Association (ADA) Certified Diabetes Education Program off site, up the hill from the hospital to 234 Jefferson Street. This creates a more patient friendly location, with more space and easier access.
- WCHD, Wilkes Regional Medical Center (WRMC), the Health Foundation, and other community agencies have started data collection for the 2013 Community Health Assessment/Community Health Needs Assessment. At the end of the assessment process priorities for focus during the next three years will be determined.
- 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, tobacco free living, and chronic disease management. Wilkes County will be working with interested local Farmer's Markets and produce vendors to assist with set up for accepting EBT/SNAP at these locations.
- Wilkes County will be receiving 2 million dollars from the Golden Leaf Foundation. Community members are working together to determine priority projects that this funding will be used for.