

Infant death rate higher in Natives

Alaska Native babies are dying at a rate twice as great as the rate for white babies, and the gap is widening according to a recent study by the Center for Disease Control.

The study, commissioned by the Alaska Division of Public Health, also showed that in the years between 1971 and 1979, the differences in crude birth weight mortality for Native babies in specific weight groups increased over white.

In 1971, the infant mortality rate for Natives was 93 percent higher for Natives than white babies. In 1979, the rate for Natives was 153 percent higher than for whites. Much of that difference was because white death rates declined more than Native rates.

The study also showed that death rates for white babies in specific weight categories decreased over the years while the death rate for Native in two of the three weight categories actually increased.

According to the study the

Native infant death rate during the 1970s was twice than that for whites while in 1979 and 1980 the death rate was 2.5 times that of whites. The study showed that white babies died at a rate of 8.5 babies per 1,000 live births while 22.3 Native babies died per 1,000 live births.

The study showed that in 1979 and 1980, 41 percent of white infant deaths and 54 percent of Native infant deaths occurred after the first month of life. That figure means that the death rate of babies who died some time after birth is 3.5 times higher than the death rate for white babies.

According to Dr. John Middaugh of the Epidemiology office in Anchorage, there are numerous reasons for the differing rates but he said that he hasn't got the final study in front of him for final review.

Middaugh said more information will be available of the on the study within two weeks.