

# Cancer prevention high priority in NSB

by **Renie M. Pelowski**

Cancer Prevention Coordinator

During the Fiscal year of 1984-85, the Cancer Research Project, NSB, gathered statistics concerning cancer morbidity and mortality of Natives across the North Slope. The three types of cancers which were prevalent throughout all villages of the slope were lung cancer, colorectal cancer, and cervical cancer. The decision to promote cancer prevention was made and the Cancer Research Project decided to focus on prevention of lung and cervical cancer.

The project people met with the North Slope Borough Health Board to help determine strategies to best promote lung and cervical cancer prevention.

Lung cancer, unfortunately, is commonly incurable. There are no screening techniques available to detect lung cancer in an early stage. Therefore, most people who are diagnosed with

lung cancer die from this dreaded disease. Approximately 90 percent of all lung cancers are directly related to cigarette smoking. Prevention, of course, then focuses on getting this information to people across the North Slope, encouraging people who smoke (especially teenagers) never to start. We turned to the media to help us to get these messages out. Numerous public service announcements have been made and aired on the KBRW-Barrow radio station. We are also in the process of having these public service announcements done in Inupiaq, in an attempt to reach all peoples of the Slope. Plans are being made to send these recorded messages to other radio stations which have access to some of the villages on the slope.

We have previewed and evaluated educational programs concerning general health with a non-smoking component which can be implemented within the schools (grades K-12) by

either the teachers or the school nurse. Also available for school use will be a youth smoking cessation program for the junior and senior high school students. It is our hope that by repeatedly exposing children to the facts about the harmful effects of cigarette smoking, less children will begin to smoke and eventually, the rate of lung cancer and disease will decrease.

Cervical cancer is often curable in the early stages. Pap smears enable physicians to discover cervical cancer in its early stages. A pap smear is a test which is performed on women, usually 16 years and older, to determine whether or not there are cancerous cells in the cervical area. It is a painless procedure, but one that women often feel uncomfortable about. If a pap smear is done yearly, the risk of having a cancer which metastasizes (spreads to other parts of the body) decreases dramatically.

Our goal was to develop a way in which women would routinely come in for a Pap smear. With the suggestions of the NSB Health Board we devised a Birthday-card appointment reminder system. The birthday card 'reminders' are to be mailed out at the beginning of each month to every woman who has a birthday that month. The card has a Happy Birthday greeting and also a reminder to call her Community Health Aid or Community Health Practitioner and set up a time to come in for her annual Pap smear.

Most women felt it would be best to have one day designated as 'Pap Day' or 'Ladies Day' each month where all women who had a birthday that month could come in together and have their Pap smears. Each CHA/CHP will begin the program when it is best suited for their village (i.e. when most families return from

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camp and women are once again in their permanent homes). We are all hoping the Birthday card appointment reminder system will add a personal touch to a much-needed annual check-up and make it a more pleasant ex-

perience. Some women even suggested a Potluck at the clinic to celebrate their birthdays together. Now wouldn't that make an annual cancer check-up fun!

Other plans include making bilingual pamphlets about lung cancer; and videotaping a program about the Cancer Research program about the Cancer Research Project, its findings and possible preventive measures people can take to lower their risk of developing cancer.