Communicating the Burden of Cancer to Healthcare Professionals
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Background:
Cancer is a leading cause of death in Vermont.¹ Many behavioral risk factors such as tobacco use, poor diet, and physical inactivity greatly increase the risk of cancer.

State health departments collect data on behavioral risk factors, as well as cancer screening adherence and incidence for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers. While public health programs routinely use this data for cancer prevention efforts, it is often not systematically communicated to healthcare professionals.

As a result, healthcare professionals may not be aware of the availability of this data. Healthcare professionals in Vermont may benefit from knowing the current rate of behavioral risk factors in the county they practice, as well as the rate of cancer screening.

Purpose: This study assesses healthcare professional knowledge of county-level public health data related to cancer, as well as determines a suitable way for communicating the data.

Methods:
An online survey was conducted late March to early April 2018.

Healthcare professionals were recruited through the statewide cancer coalition.

An online survey was emailed via Constant Contact to 124 coalition members who were healthcare professionals and therefore eligible to respond.

There were 17 respondents, a 14% response rate. Survey responses were summarized.

Results:
1. Less than a third of respondents were aware of the prevalence of behavioral risk factors (i.e., smoking, poor diet) in the county where they practice. Nearly half of the respondents were uncertain.

Were respondents aware of the prevalence of behavioral risk factors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
<th>Neither agreed/disagreed</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Strongly agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Nearly all respondents felt they could better serve patients by knowing the percentage of behavioral risk factors within their county.

Could respondents better serve patients by knowing the prevalence of behavioral risk factors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
<th>Neither agreed/disagreed</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>41%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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3. Most respondents agreed they could better serve patients by knowing the percentage of their population up-to-date on cancer screening.

Could respondents better serve patients by knowing cancer screening prevalence?

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Strongly agreed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Three-quarters of respondents felt they could better serve their patients by knowing whether cancer incidence in their county differs from the state.

Could respondents better serve patients by knowing if cancer incidence in their county differs from the state?

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5. Eighty-two percent of respondents agreed the availability of infographics would be beneficial to their work.

Conclusions:
Vermont healthcare professionals were somewhat aware of county-level data related to cancer. Most respondents agreed that awareness of these data, specifically prevalence of tobacco use, poor diet, and other behavioral risk factors, would improve their work. Many healthcare professionals also agreed the availability of an infographic would be helpful in communicating these data.

Final Thoughts: Recommendations
Increased access to these data in a user-friendly version may benefit healthcare professionals in Vermont.

Vermont Cancer Resources:
Kindred Connections - vcsn.net/make-a-kindred-connection.html
Vermonters Taking Action Against Cancer (VTIAC) - vtac.org
Vermont Cancer Plan - www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/reports/cancer
Smoking Cessation for patients and providers - 802Quits.org

*Sources:
¹ Vermont Vital Statistics, 2016