



October 10, 2006

This letter is prepared in response to your call on October 6, 2006 expressing concern about the possible increase in cancer cases in your neighborhood. Considering the recent release of studies suggesting possible increase in cancer cases due to the melt down of the reactor at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory in the 1950s (Study Says Lab Meltdown Caused Cancer, Los Angeles Times October 6, 2006), your concern is understandable. I do not have the means to comment on the facts of the reported studies. However, I can evaluate the occurrences of cancer in your neighborhood and share the results with you.

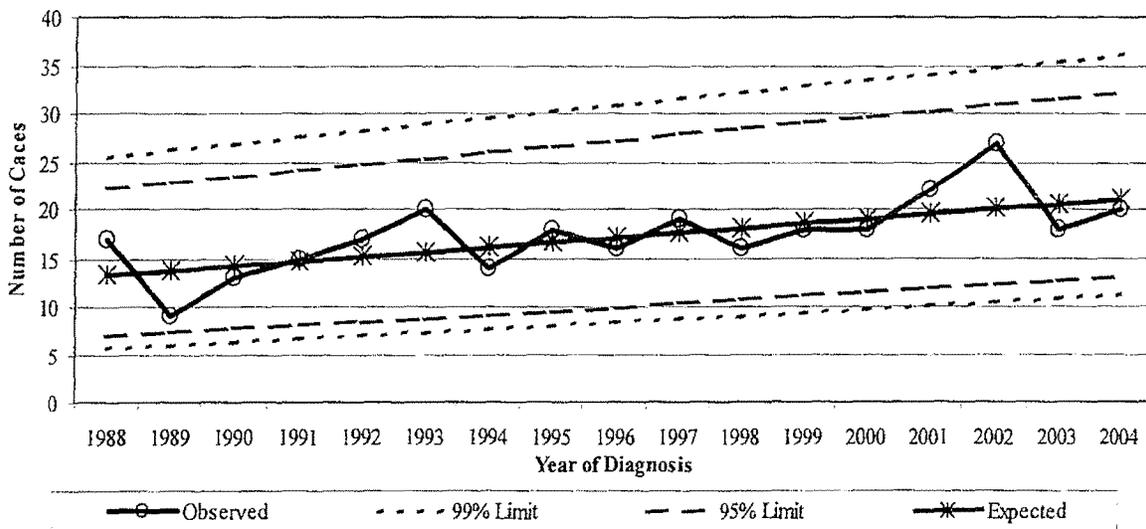
Since 1988, the Tri-Counties Cancer Surveillance Program has registered all newly developed cancer cases in the San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. Your neighborhood is located in the census tract 75.03 in Ventura County. From January first 1988 through December 31, 2004 (the last year for which data collection is complete), a total of 297 cases of all types of cancers were registered among residents of this census tract. If we assume that residents of this area have the same chances of developing cancer as the residents of the other parts of the Tri-Counties Region, then we would have expected to register 283 cases of cancer in them. The difference of 14 additional cases over a 17 years period is statistically not significant and represent normal fluctuations expected in any measurement based on biological events. Table 1, below presents the observed and expected numbers for some major cancers in this area. While reviewing this table please note that: 1) none of the differences are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$; 2) the total number of other cancers in this period were generally smaller than one per year, and thus are not presented; 3) thyroid cancer is of particular importance because it is the most "radio-sensitive" cancer we know and its incidence is generally expected to increase after significant radiation exposure, as it happened in the case of Chernobyl meltdown in Ukraine in 1986.

Cancer Sites	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	OBS	EXP	OBS	EXP	OBS	EXP
All Sites	172	150	125	133	297	283
Prostate	51	40	-	-	51	40
Breast	*	*	46	47	*	*
Lung and Bronchus	19	20	9	14	28	34
Colon and Rectum	15	15	16	11	31	26
Melanoma of the Skin	16	10	8	6	24	17
Thyroid	*	*	*	*	7	7
Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma	12	7	*	*	*	*
Urinary Bladder	11	10	*	*	*	*

* Counts of less than 5 are not presented according to preserve confidentiality of the data based on the guidelines of the California Cancer Registry.
 - Not Applicable

Figure 1, also shows the long term trends in diagnosis of newly developed cancers in this census tract.

Figure 1. Long Term Trends of Diagnosis of Newly Developed Invasive Cancers in Census Tract 75.03, Ventura County, All Cancers Combined, 1988-2004



As noticed in this figure, the annual incidence of newly developed cancers follows the trends in expected numbers, with few deviations in some years. However, none of the deviations cross over the 99% or even the 95% confidence intervals, and thus are statistically not significant. However, the close examination of this figure also reveals that the number of expected cancers has slightly increased from less than 15 in 1988 to slightly over 20 in 2004. This increase in the numbers, in spite of the fact that age adjusted incidence rate of invasive cancers in this census tract has actually declined by 7.5 percent between 1990 and 2000, is due to the age structure of the population in this census tract. Population of census tract 75.03 has increased by 10 percent between 1990 and 2000 censuses. This increase, however, has not been equal for all ages. Individuals under 35 years of age have actually decreased by 4.5 percent, while older individuals have increased. Persons between 35 and 64 have increased by 28 percent and those 65 and over have increased by 36 percent. Cancer being a disease of the old age is more frequently diagnosed in older people and thus the absolute numbers of cases have increased, while the age adjusted rates have actually decreased like most other locations in California.

Based on this analysis, I conclude that occurrence of newly diagnosed invasive cancers in census tract 75.03 in Ventura County, that includes your neighborhood, does not show any unusual pattern and has actually decreased by 7.5 percent from 1988 through 2004.

I hope that this brief will help you with your concern. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions, or need more clarification.

Sincerely,

K. Nasser

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Epidemiologist

cc. Robert Levin, MD. Health Officer, Ventura County.

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