

**From:** Tomedi, Laura, DOH  
**Sent:** Monday, March 05, 2012 4:19 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Important note about cancer survivorship data

Dear Cancer Council members,

First, thank you again for allowing me to present at your meeting on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. I really enjoyed sharing my analysis with such an involved audience.

Second, I have a quick follow-up to our presentation, "Cancer Survivorship among Adults in New Mexico, NM BRFSS 2009-2010". In discussion with council members after the talk, Susan and I realized that there may be some confusion regarding the age-adjusted rates that we reported. Although age-adjusting is important when comparing two groups with different age distributions, age-adjusted rates generally shouldn't be used to express what the "actual" rate of a condition or behavior is for either group.

To clarify, using smoking as an example:

- On the slide: "Survivors are More Likely to Smoke", it shows that the age-adjusted smoking rate for survivors is about 30%, or almost twice as high as adults never diagnosed with cancer. In this kind of comparison, it's the ratio that's the most important, not the rates. However, as I mentioned in my talk, the "actual" (or "crude") rate of survivors' smoking is 17%, and the actual rate for adults never diagnosed with cancer is 18%, so these are the numbers that should be used if talking about these groups independently.

Thank you again, and I apologize for any confusion.

Laura Tomedi, PhD, MPH  
CDC/CSTE Applied Epidemiology Fellow  
Chronic Disease Prevention & Control Bureau  
New Mexico Department of Health  
5301 Central Ave NE, Ste. 800  
Albuquerque, NM 87108  
(505) 383-0158  
FAX: (505) 841-5865  
[laura.tomedi@state.nm.us](mailto:laura.tomedi@state.nm.us)