



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta, GA 30333

April 9, 2010

[REDACTED]
Loxahatchee, FL 33470

Dear [REDACTED]

This letter is in response to your April 1st correspondence concerning the Acreage brain cancer issue. Your specific question concerned determining and defining the acreage area as a "cancer cluster" and information about other cancer clusters in the United States.

A cancer cluster can be defined as a statistically significantly increased incidence of a specific type of cancer in a group of people in a geographic area over a period of time. The analysis done by the Florida Department of Health for the geographical area that they defined as the Acreage area does show statistically significantly elevated pediatric brain cancer for specific time periods. Therefore, those cases of brain cancer do meet the definition of a cancer cluster. A "suspected cancer cluster" would be cancer cases that have been brought to the attention of the local or state health department that have not yet been fully investigated. I do not have a definition for "true and meaningful cancer cluster".

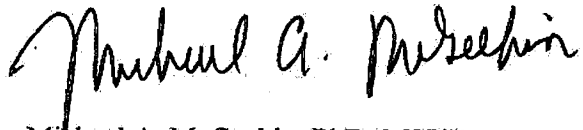
CDC does not track the number of cancer clusters reported or confirmed for individual states or for the nation. Of the many cancer cluster investigations that have been conducted, I am not aware of any that identified and environmental cause. There are a number of scientific and methodological reasons for the inability of these investigations to show associations between the cancer incidence and environmental exposures, including relatively small numbers, multiple etiologic factors, long induction period for most cancers, and the immigration and emigration of a population in a geographical area. Also, I do not know of any study that has investigated how quickly cancer rates returned to average levels after the original study period for which the cluster was identified.

The best source of information on the Acreage cancer issue is the Florida Department of Health. It is my understanding that they have opened an Information Center in the community to facilitate the flow of information between the community members and the government agencies.

I realize that having a cancer cluster identified in your neighborhood, with the concomitant health concerns, publicity, and media attention, creates a high level of consternation among the residents. I hope that the activities of the state and county agencies in responding to the community concerns will help to assuage some of those fears.

Thank you for your letter and your interest in providing accurate information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael A. McGeehin".

Michael A. McGeehin, PhD, MSPH
Director,
Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects
National Center for Environmental Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Cc: Sharon M. Watkins, PhD, Sr. Environmental Epidemiologist, Florida Department of Health