



Comments on the Gradient Report



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History of Cancer Registry

- Established in 1982 to track patterns of cancer in Massachusetts cities and towns
 - Motivated by Woburn childhood leukemia excess in 1970s
- Now part of statewide environmental health tracking program





Northampton cancer statistics

- Overall (all sites combined) fewer cases than expected in 2001-2005 compared to Mass.
- Excess multiple myeloma, kidney, oral and cervical cancer in females; excess multiple myeloma in males
- No statistically significant excesses; significant deficit of prostate cancer in males





Gradient Report

- Looked at census tracts and 1 mile radius around landfill
- Found statistically significant excess of leukemia in Census Tract 8222
 - Argued that it was not “stable” - misrepresents significance testing
- Found excess Non-Hodgkin lymphoma near landfill
 - Female SIR=375 (95% CI=77-1095)





Gradient Report, cont.

- Conclusions not justified by the findings
- Additional work by Mass. Dept. of Public Health needs to be taken into account
- Precautionary approach in the face of uncertainty is warranted

