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Investigation of ALS in Corrales Report

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Dear CEWG members,

Thank you for the interest in the ALS investigation. After reading your e-mail to identify what you'd like to understand better, I pulled out the essential questions you noted and provided the responses in green, below:

1. "A prevalence rate for ALS in Corrales is calculated for a 16-year period. The data for comparison purposes are reported as annual prevalence rates. How does the prevalence for a 16-year period relate to the prevalence for the 16 annual rates over the same 16 years? Is the 16-year prevalence rate some sort of average of the 16 annual rates?" Ideally, you would compare the rate for one year in the US to the same year in Corrales. When a community is small, though, it can be better to calculate an average rate over several years. From the report, in the numerator, you have all of the ALS patients for 16 years (patients from 2000 + patients from 2001, etc.). In the denominator, you have the population for Corrales for that period of time (population of Corrales from 2000 + population of Corrales from 2001, etc.).
2. "Are there logical bounds on how widely the 16 annual rates could vary from the rate for the 16-year period?" If you calculate a rate for each of the 16 years, this is a very imprecise estimate and you will see huge variation from year to year. A more precise and stable estimate is a rate for the 16-year period. The challenge here is that Corrales is a small population AND we are trying to estimate the risk of a rare disease.

Kind regards,

Heidi

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