

June 23, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Where you live matters. And if you are fortunate enough to live in Collier County, chances are you're in a lot better shape than most people.

According to a new study from researchers at the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation and the Imperial College London, women living in Collier County have the longest life expectancy in the United States—86 years—second in the world only to Japan. Men have the second-longest life expectancy in the U.S.—80.2 years—which lags only Fairfax County, Virginia by 0.9 years.

Life expectancy, defined in an article published in *Population Health Metrics*, is how long someone born in the U.S. in 2007 would be expected to live compared with those born decades earlier. The statistical analysis and full article are available at <http://www.pophealthmetrics.com/content/pdf/1478-7954-9-16.pdf>.

It's no secret what cuts life short. According to the authors, the most preventable determiners of shorter life expectancy include obesity, diet, smoking, high blood pressure, physical inactivity, alcohol, and elevated fats in the blood. The authors note that availability of care and insurance coverage also are significant contributors to good health, loosely correlated with standards of living and educational levels. And of course, access to quality health care is essential.

The University of Washington statistical study confirms another recent accolade for our County. As reported a few months ago, for the second year in a row, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation sponsored study by the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute ranked Collier County the healthiest overall of the 67 counties in Florida. The rankings of health outcomes, which account for 50% of the metrics and are based on statistics before 2007, are measured as the combination of mortality (death rate) and morbidity (sickness). In other words, in healthiness, we're number one!

Digging deeper into the Collier numbers, we find that poor physical and mental health days have decreased modestly over the past year, while the number of low birth weight infants has increased minimally, which isn't good. Health factors such as smoking and obesity remain unchanged, while sexually transmitted diseases have increased. Teen birth rate is minimally lower, but single parent households have increased markedly. Violent crime and motor vehicle death rates are both moving in the right direction. Unemployment and children living in poverty continue to plague us locally, a tragedy in a community like ours with abundant resources. On the other hand, high school graduation rates are up, with 47% of students going on to higher education.

So as good as our ranking is, we still have much to do to ensure the health of our community. Toward that end, the Collier County Health Department has created "Sustaining Excellence," a consortium of social service, public, not-for-profit and for-profit institutions, focused on opportunity areas. We have already convened in our downtown Telford Auditorium to discuss ways to improve the health of all in our community.

Local access to great health care and other resources has a real impact. Representing one of Collier County's leading medical institutions makes me proud and humble to be a part of a healthcare community which has again been shown to make a difference. "*Live long and live well in Collier County*" could well be our community's banner.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* by emailing me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added; and join us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nchflorida.