

# GCSAA Announces Next Phase of Health Research Program

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has announced plans to implement the second phase of the association's planned in-depth study of occupational health issues. GCSAA will launch a new series of health research projects and expand its commitment to chemical applicator education.

The new series will advance a preliminary statistical study conducted by an independent research team from the University of Iowa (UI) College of Medicine. The results of the study, which was commissioned by GCSAA Scholarship & Research, were announced Feb. 6 at the association's annual conference in Dallas.

The study was a statistical analysis of death certificates among 618 former GCSAA members who died between 1970 and 1992. The Iowa researchers found that the group had a higher rate of mortality from lung cancer than the general population. They also found higher-than-average mortality for a number of other cancers, including brain, large intestine, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and prostate.

The UI research team was led by Dr. Burton Kross, UI associate professor of preventive medicine and environmental health. Kross is associate director of the UI's Institute of Agricultural Medicine and Occupational Health.

"From a public and occupational health perspective, the excess number of lung cancer deaths is a primary concern," Kross said. Lung and other head and neck cancers have been strongly associated with cigarette and cigar smoking, but Kross strongly cautioned that no cause-and-effect relationship to any illness can be determined by this statistical analysis. According to researchers, a statistical study cannot be interpreted to link any particular factor to cause of death.

Stephen F. Mona, GCSAA executive director/CEO, said, "GCSAA initiated and financed this study because we needed to establish a baseline for future research. We now have that baseline and can better identify what merits further investigation."

"Our mission in funding this independent mortality study was to begin the first phase of an overall look at occupational health and safety issues that affect our members," Mona continued. "This is a long-term commitment to ensuring that superintendents work in a safe and healthy environment."

The next phase of the overall effort could include helping association members stop smoking, expanding GCSAA's current education and training programs, and completing a statistical mortality ratio study to put UI's preliminary data into context.

"We also think this gives us an opportunity to forge new partnerships with groups that can help us accomplish our mission," Mona said. "For example, the chemical manufacturers have made great strides in packaging and formulation over the past decade. This is one more reason to work closely with them in their efforts to develop new technology in products and packaging. Another example could be

working with an organization like the American Cancer Society on the smoking issue. This also gives GCSAA the opportunity to continue to strongly encourage and support the Environmental Protection Agency."

Headquartered in Lawrence, GCSAA is a 13,000-member international professional association dedicated to promoting responsible golf course management. Its members are the men and women who manage and maintain golf courses throughout the world.

*(Editor's note - GCSAA's contact team consists of: Stephen F. Mona, CAE - Executive Director/CEO; Pat Jones - Director of Development; Scott Smith - Public Relations Manager; Kirk Kahler - Government Relations Manager.)*



## GCSAA Mortality Study Key Points

- 1) The study results are preliminary. The study has yet to go through the scientific community peer review process and be formally published before the results are "final."
- 2) The study is *only* a statistical analysis of mortality. It does not address what caused the deaths. *No cause and effect can or should be drawn from the study.*
- 3) The scientists said specifically that golfers are not at risk. The study also does not address or conclude any possible relationship to wildlife.
- 4) GCSAA initiated and financed this study because the association has an obligation to its members to help ensure their health and safety. GCSAA and the University of Iowa together released this information to the public and to the media.
- 5) Once the results are final, GCSAA will have a baseline to decide what merits further investigation.
- 6) This is only the first phase of a long-term commitment by GCSAA to study overall occupational safety and health for its members.
- 7) GCSAA will work closely with the golf industry, health organizations and the EPA throughout the process.

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