

Lew-Port cancer rate within norm — study

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LEWISTON — Cancer rates in the towns of Lewiston and Porter are not excessive when compared to county, state or federal statistics, a Buffalo researcher concluded in a one-year study released to residents Monday night.

"This study has revealed no evidence of unusually high cancer incidence in the (Lake Ontario Ordnance Works-SCA Chemical Services) study areas," said Dr. Tim Byers, an epidemiologist

in the department of social and preventative medicine at the State University at Buffalo.

The study of 1,100 residents in the two towns revealed 463 cases of cancer between 1971 and 1980.

Based on national averages, Byers said 524 cancer cases would be considered normal.

"What we are talking about is relative risk, relative to the county, the state and the country," Byers told a capacity crowd in Town Hall.

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Byers, assisted by UB assistant professor John Vena, said the cancer statistics were obtained from the state Health Department, then compared with local, state and national averages.

The study did not distinguish between environmental, occupational or social causes of cancer, Byers said.

Researchers said they planned an additional, more detailed study of lung cancer rates in the two towns.

Residents, citing the presence of hazardous and radioactive waste sites in Lewiston and Porter, for years have expressed concerns about the cancer rates in the two towns.

The SCA plant in Porter has operated in the community since 1972. The former ordnance works on Pletcher Road in Lewiston has been used by the federal government for the storage and disposal of radioactive materials since 1944.

Byers said he began the study after discussions about the ordnance site with Lewiston council member Joan Gipp, who was pleased with the results.

"It makes me feel good, naturally," Gipp said.

Although the study did not show excessive cancer rates, Byers cau-

tioned the residents that he could not predict what health risk residents might face in the future.

"I wish I could say that, but I cannot," Byers said during his presentation.

Byers also said he did not want the U.S. Department of Energy to use his study for ammunition if the federal government decides to convert the former ordnance plant into a regional radioactive waste disposal center.

"The judge about what to do with the site in the future should not be based on health studies in the past," Byers said.

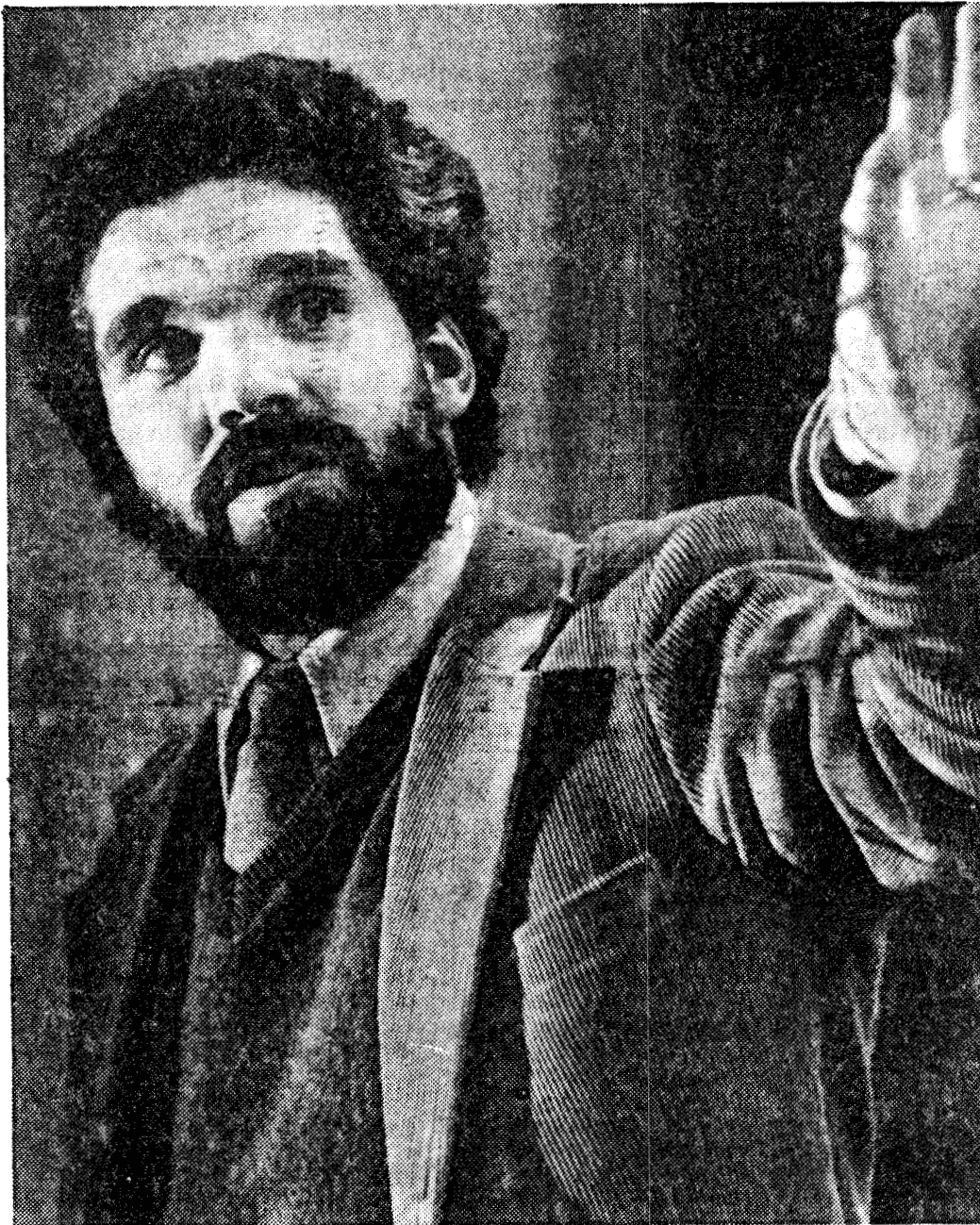
After Byer's presentation, the Rev. Dr. Paul Moore of Lewiston's First Presbyterian Church presented his own informal study of cancer rates in his parish. The Rev. Dr. Moore said 46 of 147 deaths over the past six years have been attributed to cancer.

"They have died and I have buried them," he said, while declining to further interpret the statistics.

Informal studies, like the one presented Monday by the Rev. Dr. Moore, have suggested abnormal cancer rates in the two communities, but epidemiologists have cautioned against drawing any conclusions from unscientific research efforts.

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Dr. Timothy Beyer of the State University of Buffalo assures Lewiston-Porter residents that cancer rates in their community are normal. Results of a year-long study were released Monday, after residents had expressed fears about neighboring waste disposal sites.