

CANCER IS LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR US HISPANICS

MIAMI: Cancer is the leading cause of death among Hispanics living in the United States, according to a report yesterday by the American Cancer Society. While heart disease is the top killer in the nation as a whole, cancer kills more often among Hispanics, the largest minority group in the United States, making up 17.4 percent of the population. And the problem of cancer could get worse in the coming years, now that most of the population's growth is coming from US-based births rather than immigration, experts said.

"The growth in the population of US residents of Hispanic origin is now driven primarily by births, not immigration, which will probably change the future cancer risk profile of this group," said Rebecca Siegel, director of surveillance information for the American Cancer Society and lead author of the report. "The second generation, born and raised in the US and more intertwined in our lifestyle, including our diet, has higher cancer rates than first-generation immigrants, so we may see a higher cancer burden in this group in the future."

This year, 125,900 new cancer cases and 37,800 cancer deaths are expected among Hispanics/Latinos in the US, said the report produced every three years by the American Cancer Society and published in CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians. Lung cancer causes about one in six (17 percent) cancer deaths in Hispanic men, followed by colon cancer and liver cancer. Breast cancer is the

leading cause of death among Hispanic women, followed by lung and colorectal cancers. Overall, cancer death rates have been decreasing since the mid 1990s in both Hispanic men and women.

Cancer incidence is also dropping among Hispanics by about 2.4 percent yearly in men and 0.5 percent in women, mirroring trends among non-Hispanic whites. Even though cancer is the top killer among Hispanics, the study noted that cancer is actually far less common in Hispanics than in whites. "Overall, cancer incidence rates are 20 percent lower in Hispanics than in non-Hispanic whites and cancer death rates are 30 percent lower," said the report. "This is mainly because Hispanics are less likely than non-Hispanic whites to be diagnosed with the four most common cancers (prostate, breast, lung, and colon).

However, Hispanics have a higher risk of cancers associated with infectious agents, such as those of the stomach, liver, and cervix. "Hispanics are often diagnosed with advanced disease. "Although less access to high-quality care due to lower socioeconomic status contributes to this disparity, some studies have shown that Hispanics are at higher risk of advanced-stage disease even when socioeconomic status and health care access are similar," said the report. The study urged targeted, community-based intervention programs to increase screening and vaccination and encourage healthy lifestyle behaviors. —AFP



VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK, Rwanda: Tourists Sarah and John Scott from Worcester, England, take a step back as a male silverback mountain gorilla from the family of mountain gorillas named Amahoro, which means "peace" in the Rwandan language, unexpectedly steps out from the bush to cross their path. —AP photos

RWANDA: TOURISTS MARVEL AT GORILLAS WHOSE NUMBERS ARE RISING

VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK, Rwanda: Deep in Rwanda's steep-sloped forest, the mountain gorillas look both endearing and intimidating. A tourist might feel conflicting impulses to shy away and reach for a hug (the latter is not advised) when a gorilla brushes past on a path. The way a gorilla snoozes, scratches a leg or casts an inquiring glance - it all seems familiar, and yet wild. "You can't tell what they're thinking," said John Scott, a retired chemical engineer from Britain's Worcester area who trekked to the high-altitude habitat to see the creatures with close genetic links to humans.

This sense of kinship helps explain why increasing numbers of tourists are heading to Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park, fueling an industry seen as key to the welfare of the critically endangered subspecies as well as the national economy. Those visitors can also be a threat because gorillas are vulnerable to human diseases and so reduced in numbers that a veterinary team called Gorilla Doctors cares for sick and injured apes.

The mountain gorilla population dropped sharply in the last century because of poaching, illness and human encroachment, although the numbers are now rising. These days, an estimated 900 mountain gorillas live in Rwanda and neighboring Congo and Uganda. In Rwanda, conservation is big business. Eighty individual permits to see the gorillas for one hour are available daily for a maximum price of \$750 each, and 20 percent of permit revenue goes to schools, clinics and other local community projects, the park website says. More than 20,000 people visited Rwanda's gorillas in 2014, nearly three times as many as in 2003, according to government figures.

Drowsy gorillas

Many came from the United States, Britain, Australia, Germany and Canada. Last week, people in hiking gear sipped coffee and milled around at the park headquarters before breaking into groups of eight, the limit for tourist parties visiting separate gorilla families in the dense undergrowth. "How's the pace? Are you feeling the mountains yet or not?" guide Ferdinand Ndamiyabo asked his

encounter: Don't point, speak softly, don't cough or sneeze in the animals' direction and stay a minimum of 23 feet (7 meters) away. If a gorilla approaches, crouch down, don't make eye contact and make a low sound similar to that of clearing the throat, which gorillas use to express friendliness. What awaited in a clearing were drowsy gorillas, including two young ones that idly grappled and another that groomed Gahinga, an adult male

Karisimbi, a female gorilla named after the highest volcano in the border-spanning Virunga mountain range where gorillas live. He described the injury as superficial and said there was no need for doctors to intervene, a complex process that would require darting the gorilla with a tranquilizer and likely fending off other gorillas before treatment on the spot.

International attention

Another member of the group is Kajoriti, a male who lost a hand to a poacher's snare. American researcher Dian Fossey, who won the confidence of gorillas by imitating their noises, moving on her knuckles and chewing on vegetation, brought international attention to the primates' plight. Fossey, whose book "Gorillas in the Mist" inspired a movie starring Sigourney Weaver, was murdered at her Rwandan research camp in 1985 and is buried at a mountain gravesite.

Rwanda descended into bloody chaos during its 1994 genocide, and tourism only returned to Volcanoes National Park at the end of the decade. Since then, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and Hollywood actors are among those who visited Rwanda's mountain gorillas, whose home is a two-hour drive from Kigali, the capital. The group led by guide Ndamiyabo followed the gorillas after their morning nap. At times, gorillas fell in behind the startled tourists, almost bumping into them as they advanced. Sarah Scott, a nurse and wife of tourist John Scott, said the close encounter was awe-inspiring. The gorillas seemed so human - whether "grooming or passing wind" - but also huge and powerful, she said, adding: "One swipe of the hand and that's it." —AP



VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK, Rwanda: Members of a family of mountain gorillas named Amahoro, take a rest in the dense forest on the slopes of Mount Bisoke volcano.

group, including an Associated Press team, during a hike up a volcano that is home to a family of gorillas called Amahoro, which means "peace" in the Rwandan language. It took close to two hours of walking to reach the gorillas, a relatively gentle climb in mild weather through tangled vines, stinging nettles and other lush vegetation.

Ndamiyabo earlier laid out rules for

silverback that dominates the Amahoro. Gahinga eventually rolled off his back and rested his great head on an arm, watching the camera-toting arrivals. He made a low sound.

"The silverback is saying, 'No problem, my friends, take as many pictures as you want,'" Ndamiyabo declared. Dr Jean Bosco Noheli, a Gorilla Doctors veterinarian who accompanied the tourists, noted a wrist wound on

DIRTY AIR SENDS MILLIONS TO EARLY GRAVE: STUDY

PARIS: Outdoor air pollution from sources as varied as cooking fires in India, traffic in the United States and fertiliser use in Russia, claim some 3.3 million lives globally every year, researchers said yesterday. The vast majority of victims - nearly 75 percent - died from strokes and heart attacks triggered mainly by long-term inhalation of dust-like particles floating in the air. The remainder succumbed due to respiratory diseases and lung cancer, according to a study in the journal Nature.

Smouldering cooking and heating fires in India and China were the single biggest danger - accounting for a third of deaths attributed to outdoor pollution, said study co-author Jos Lelieveld of the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry in Germany. The new numbers support a 2014 World Health Organization report that blamed a similar number of deaths on outdoor pollution, and another 4.3 million per year on pollution within the home or other buildings.

Unless stricter regulations are adopted, the number of deaths from outdoor pollution would double to 6.6 million by 2050, the team of international researchers forecast. "If this growing premature mortality by air pollution is to be avoided, intensive control measures will be needed especially in south and east Asia," Lelieveld

told journalists via conference call. He highlighted the "interesting" role of farm fertiliser.

Killer Desert Dust

In Russia, the eastern United States and east Asia, agriculture was responsible for the bulk of pollution with fine particles under 2.5 microns in size - small enough to easily penetrate the lungs. A micron is a millionth of a metre. Ammonia released by fertiliser combines with the dangerous sulfates and nitrates in car exhaust fumes, to make the tiny particles. The combination is deadly in the Western world, said the team. Their calculations suggested car exhaust caused about 20 percent of pollution-related deaths in Britain, Germany and the US - while the global average is about five percent.

The team used computer models combining air quality measurements, population and health statistics and data on the health risks of breathing in pollution. Lelieveld said the study offered the most complete picture yet as it included data on the risks in heavily-polluted places such as parts of China, while previous research relied mainly on conditions in the United States and Europe. Humans are not the sole source of deadly air pollution on Earth - desert dust was linked to at least one in 10 deaths, the team added. —AFP

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