**Title:**

Using Culturally-Focused Storytelling to Empower Appalachian Kentucky Youth to Understand and Address Cancer Disparities in Their Communities

Kentucky has the highest cancer incidence and mortality rates in the US. The greatest cancer burden lies in the Appalachian region (1, 2). These disparities are driven by social determinants of health (2, 3). Twenty-five youth participants of the University of Kentucky’s Appalachian Career Training in Oncology (ACTION) Program created culturally-framed essays in which they described their experiences with cancer, their hypotheses as to why cancer rates are so high in Appalachian Kentucky, and potential solutions (4). We used content analysis to identify common themes within the essays, searching specifically for cancer types participants have observed, their feelings toward the causes of cancer, and their proposed solutions.The data show the participants observe lung, colon, breast and skin cancer, which are known to be elevated in the region. They believe high tobacco use, low education levels, and low health care access increase cancer rates. Solutions include increased cancer education, tobacco control, and better health care access/engagement. These observations and suggestions align with social determinants that drive the cancer rates. Through storytelling, we empowered youth to understand cancer through experiences and cultural framework. We also encouraged youth to brainstorm community-based intervention strategies that could reduce the cancer burden.

**References:**

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