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Cancer cause tough to peg

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■ Experts say three cases of rare cancer at Southside High are statistically unusual.

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number of cancer cases at the 1,100-student school is statistically high.

The state Health Department is investigating whether environmental factors are linked to the development of cancer in 13 current or former students at the school at 777 S. Main St., Elmira.

Cancer in people younger than 20 is relatively uncommon, the American Cancer Society reports. Particularly unusual is the fact that three of the 13 students have developed testicular cancer, one of the rarest forms of the disease.

Four out of every 100,000 American men are found to have testicular cancer each year, according to the American Medical Association. It accounts for only 1 percent of all cancers in men, the association said.

"It is most unusual that you have three cases at one school," said Jackie Brames, a registered nurse who works with one of the nation's leading oncologists for testicular cancer, Dr. Lawrence Einhorn of Indiana University in Indianapolis.

Dr. Rose Byland, an oncologist at the Falck Cancer Center in Elmira, called the unusually high number of cancer cases at Southside High School a statistical variance.

"Are the numbers significant?" Byland asked. "One child with cancer is a lot in my book. I don't think it's a cluster yet. It's too early to tell."

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