

Nation's poor more susceptible to cancer deaths

By Sarah Kitchen
Of the Emerald

The chance of getting and dying of cancer is disproportionately higher among poor Americans, according to a recent study conducted by the American Cancer Society.

A person's chances of survival after a diagnosis of cancer have more to do with economic status than with a person's racial or ethnic background, the report states.

The report, which will be presented today by Dr. Harold Freeman in New York, N.Y., reveals that nearly 34 million Americans below the poverty level have a cancer survival rate 10 to 15 percent below the overall rate of 50 percent.

Freeman is the chairman of the ACS subcommittee on cancer in the economically disadvantaged.

Reasons for the higher susceptibility and mortality rates given include the lack of facilities available to the poor, lack of education on the subject, and the fact that many of the cases are not detected until the illness is in advanced stages.

"While certain types of cancer are more common among the poor, many of these are a result of a poor diet and poor medical care," said Barbara Fizsgivens, a volunteer at the Lane County branch of the American Cancer Society.

One reason more poor people die of cancer is that the disease

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is not detected early enough to be prevented, said Fizsgivens.

The report states that the poor are less-educated on the subject of cancer, and as a result, they don't hear about the importance of diet in relation to preventing the disease.

Diets higher in fiber foods, such as whole-grain cereals and fruits and vegetables may

reduce the risk of certain types of cancer.

"Diet is suspected to be a factor in approximately 35 percent of all cancers," Fizsgivens said.

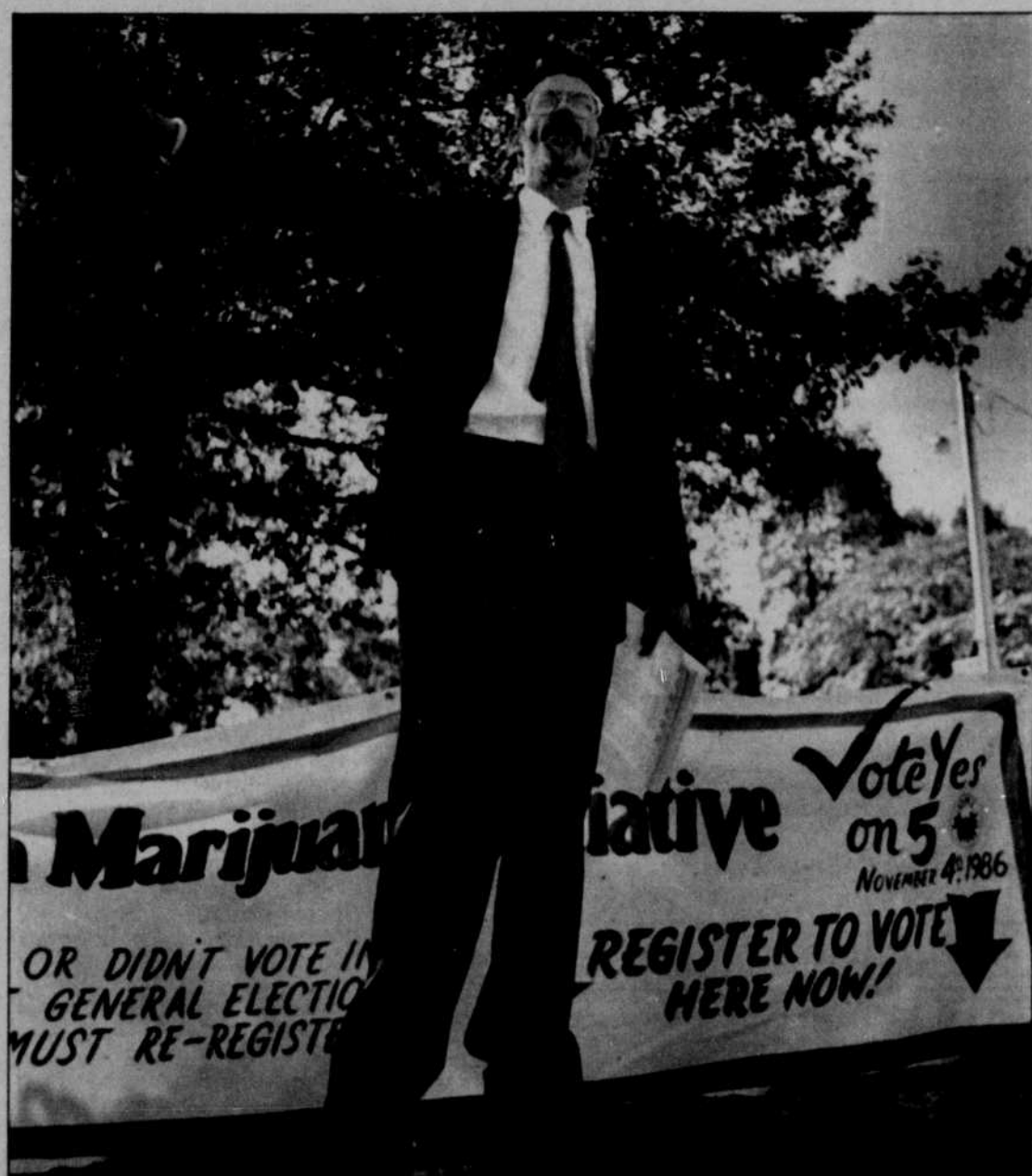
Fizsgivens said people who work in blue-collar jobs may be more prone to cancer.

"Industrial workers are susceptible to toxic substances and industrial fumes; this can

raise the chance of cancer," Fizsgivens said.

Freeman and his committee developed a number of recommendations that emphasize the importance of prevention, early detection and prompt treatment. Their recommendations will then be reviewed by the ACS Board of Director's committees.

The recommendations include the development of expanded outreach programs by community hospital emergency rooms and clinics, the development of educational materials to reach the poor, and education of health professionals about the relationship between cancer and income.



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Dr. Frederick Orther speaks in support of Ballot Measure 5, the marijuana initiative. Orther, with five fellow promoters, is traveling throughout the state to promote voter registration and increase public awareness of the initiative. The group plans to travel to Corvallis and Albany today.

Photo by Shu Shing Chen

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