Cancer now No. 1 killer in 22 states

By Associated Press

Cancer is becoming the No. 1 killer in more and more states as deaths from heart disease have declined, new health statistics show.

Nationwide, heart disease is still the leading cause of death, just ahead of cancer. While death rates for both have been falling for nearly 25 years, heart disease has dropped at a steeper rate.

As a result, cancer moved up to the top slot in 22 states in 2014, according to the latest government figures.

It's also the leading cause of death in certain groups of people, including Latinos, Asians, and adults 40 to 79.

The trend is noted in the American Cancer Society's latest annual report.

The cancer death rate has fallen 23 percent since its peak in 1991. The decrease is attributed to declining smoking rates and advances in cancer detection, treatment and prevention.

The heart disease death rate fell 46 percent in that time.

The cancer society predicts there will be nearly 1.7 million new cancer cases this year, and nearly 600,000 deaths.

Government figures for 2014 show cancer was the leading cause of death in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.