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Study can't find link between town's cancers and chemical

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A new study suggests it is impossible to say if there is a link between a chemical found in wells in a Quebec town and the high level of cancer among the community's citizens.

Data compiled by the Quebec Institute of Public Health confirms there are more cases of liver cancer and multiple myeloma in Shannon than elsewhere in the province.

Experts are advising caution in interpreting the results, which were released today. They are unable to draw a statistically significant link between the cancers in the Quebec City-area town and the presence of trichloroethylene in local wells.

The experts say it is hard to quantify the level and duration of exposure to the chemical. There is also the impossibility of examining other cancer-causing factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption and lifestyle.

A coalition of Shannon citizens is currently suing Ottawa over the contamination of their water supply by trichloroethylene they allege came from nearby Canadian Forces Base Valcartier.

The town's residents say there is a link between the chemical from the base and the cancer cases, a view that is rejected by federal lawyers.