

BREAST HEALTH FOR WOMEN by Dr. John Fudens HMC DVM PH

The incidence of benign lumpy breast disease and breast cancer, in women, is rising at an alarming rate. Eight out of ten women develop benign lumpy breast disease (risk factor for cancer) and one in eight women develop breast cancer. The risk gets worse with each passing year. In 1960 one in twenty women developed breast cancer and in 1994 the rate is one of eight. At present it is even higher. In the US breast cancer is the second leading cause of death by cancer in women, almost 30% of women's cancers. In 1995 over 183,600 women and 1,400 men developed breast cancer. Now it is much higher. Black women are less likely to develop breast cancer than white women but are presented to the physician in a more advanced stage. Breast cancer is more fatal in white men than white women because men tend to ignore a lump in their breast as cancer. More cancer is reported in the spring than any other time of the year.

Despite all the money spent on the "war on cancer" with the use of radiation, chemo and immunotherapy, CAT/MRI scans and other new medical technology, the incidence of breast cancer still climbs rapidly and the lifespan for cancer patients remains constant. Treatment for cancer has only slightly increased survival. The five year survival rate rose from 75% in 1976 to 78% in 1989. Most scientists are convinced this slight increase was due to the earlier detection of the cancer. But let's look at how the five year rate is calculated. If a patient lives one day longer than five years and dies, that is counted as a survival cure. If the patient dies one day short of five years, that is considered in the non-survival category. I have no idea what this so-called five year survival rate means except it appears to be some kind of made up data conventional medicine uses to justify their approach to this problem.

We hear the cries of more money is needed and then we will have a cure. The findings of the Government Accounting Office Report, Breast Cancer, 1971-1991: Prevention, Treatment and Research states, "there is no progress in the prevention of breast cancer or in the reduction of breast cancer mortality and no clear strategy for improving survival". The last two decades has seen the National Cancer Institute spend over \$1 billion on breast cancer alone and claims spectacular results, at the research level, but with no improvement in decreasing mortality or increasing life span. Just continues to show and prove that with government and bureaucratic agencies throwing money at a problem, the money doesn't relieve the problem and merely creates jobs for people who are not productive otherwise.

The objective of any treatment is to improve the quality and quantity of life. Conventional treatment for breast cancer is still modified/radical mastectomy instead of lumpectomy, local node resection, radiation and/or chemotherapy. These last three approaches are far less mutilating surgical techniques and they drastically reduce pain and suffering postoperatively.

The public's only exposure to the cause and treatment of breast cancer comes from the media and GUESS WHAT? A study has shown very serious discrepancies between media people's beliefs about cancer risks and what scientists have shown to be cancer risks.

A review of over 1100 news stories on breast cancer between 1972 and 1992 showed the media proclaiming the following as cancer risks: man-made chemicals, food additives, pesticides, pollution, hormones and radiation. When members of the American Association for Cancer Research were polled their answers were: diet, tobacco, drugs, alcohol and sunlight. BIG DIFFERENCE! Why the difference? Among the many outposts, on this planet, is a gross lack of taking responsibility for ourselves and others. It is easy to complain about the factors over which we appear to have no direct control rather than take control of our lives and make the changes necessary. PEOPLE DO HAVE TOTAL CONTROL OVER THE FACTORS FOR BREAST CANCER!

What are these factors we control?

1. Nutritional. The National Academy of Sciences estimates sixty percent of all women's cancers are related to nutritional factors alone. Obesity, diets high in fat, low in fiber and deficient in vitamins and minerals are associated with breast cancer. Studies between American and Japanese women show Japanese women with far less rates of cancer and that they live longer when they get breast cancer. What is the main difference between these women? Japanese women are less obese, eat a low fat high fiber diet with plenty of vitamins and minerals.

Free radicals occur in the body all the time and arise from fatty foods, tobacco, alcohol, pollutants, toxins, carcinogens, iron, smog, radiation, etc. Free radicals attack the body cells and cause damage leading to the development of cancer. Important antioxidants (free radical fighters) to consider and take would be vitamin C, vitamin E, selenium, beta-carotene, bioflavonoid, zinc and B vitamins. These act on the immune system, activate the body's defenses and combine with the free radicals to neutralize them.

2. Tobacco. There is a direct positive correlation between breast cancer and smoking. More and more women smoke. Involuntary inhalation (second hand smoking) and direct smoking both increase the risk of benign breast disease.

3. Alcohol and caffeine. Women who drink two to four alcoholic drinks per week have a two to three times greater risk of breast cancer. Twelve ounces of beer equals four ounces of wine equals one and a half ounces of whiskey. Caffeine increases the risk and progression of benign lumpy breast disease.

4. Hormonal. Women's risk of breast cancer increases if you had an early

menarche (age 10 or 11), late menopause, later pregnancy (35 and beyond), no pregnancy, abortions in the first trimester, use of estrogen by your mother in her pregnancy, oral contraceptives, use of estrogen for postmenopausal symptoms or lack of breast feeding. The use of birth control pills and hormones to ease menopause are serious risk factors.

5. Electromagnetic radiation. Breast cancer increases with exposure to radiation particularly in early childhood and teen years. The low dose radiation from chest x-rays is the most risky. Evidence is accumulating that repeated mammograms (low dose chest x-rays) also contribute to the risk. Please eliminate or use only if absolutely necessary chest x-rays, dental x-rays, and mammograms.

Thermography is more sensitive in detection, less painful and does not subject you to radiation. Self-examination of one's breasts (learn the proper technique) is as good as a mammogram and far less dangerous. Again ladies, please take responsibility for your health and welfare instead of leaving it in the hands of a machine, technician or physician.

What can you do to decrease the risk factors?

1. Eliminate or greatly decrease alcohol, tobacco and caffeine.
2. Avoid sexual promiscuity, hormones and unnecessary drugs. Keep your ethics in.
3. Minimize or eliminate exposure to radiation.
4. Put balance into your life and use exercise to keep the body and mind healthy and in shape.
5. Have routine physical examinations
6. Practice regular and frequent self-examination of your breasts.
7. Be aware of the seven cancer warning signs: lump in the breast, non-healing sore, change in wart/mole, change in bowel habits, persistent cough/hoarseness, indigestion or trouble swallowing, unusual bleeding.
8. Maintain an ideal body weight and decrease calories if necessary. Change your diet to minimize red meat, fat, sugars and refined carbohydrates. Increase fiber and eat plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits. Supplement with the antioxidants listed in the earlier portion of this article.