Legislative Update

The 1998 General Assembly has convened and there are three breast cancer related bills of importance. Breast cancer is not a partisan issue which is strongly illustrated this session as legislators on both sides of the political aisle have introduced critical pieces of breast cancer legislation. Two of the bills were initially introduced in the 1997 General Assembly and sent to the Mandated Insurance Benefits Commission for review. As we

reported to you in our last newsletter, VBCF attended the hearings. We were pleased that the Commission voted to recommend re-introduction of both bills to the 1998 General Assembly. Thank you to the Virginia legislators who provided leadership in sponsoring the following breast cancer bills:

Senator Roscoe Reynolds’ (D-Martinsville) is re-introducing Senate Bill 679, that mandates insurance coverage for reconstructive breast surgery performed as a result of a mastectomy to re-establish symmetry between the two breasts.

Delegate Phillip Hamilton

Virginians from discrimination based on personal and family genetic information.

Legislators need to hear from voters in their own districts on these issues. PLEASE call and write your representatives NOW! If you don’t know who your Senate or House representatives are, call 1-800-889-0229 and ask. You can also leave a message for your legislator at that number. Or, send a FAX message to the attention of your representative at (804) 786-6310. If you can attend Senate or House committee hearings for any of these bills, call VBCF at 804/285-1200.

If you have not already done so, take a moment NOW to share your feelings with our Virginia legislators about these three breast cancer bills. Those of us living with breast cancer and the 4,400 Virginians who will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year depend on it!
Breast cancer is ubiquitous.

That's a fancy way of saying that it's everywhere. Two events in my life confirmed for me that breast cancer is, indeed, all around us. I was in a department store one day, trying on clothing. It has become more challenging to find something that not only appeals to me, and is somewhat flattering on this postmenopausal body, but also accommodates a breast prosthesis. Is my prosthesis going to show because this dress or blouse is too low cut? Do I look balanced? Is this fabric too sheer? Feeling particularly frustrated one afternoon, I had despaired of ever finding something that I liked. As I was gathering up the outfits that did not pass muster, I happened to glance up at the upper left hand corner of the mirror. I smiled with recognition at a VBCF sticker on the mirror. Someone had placed it there, as if to say, "A breast cancer advocate has been here!" I gathered my things and left the fitting room feeling less frustrated. VBCF truly is reaching out and supporting those affected by breast cancer, often in ways that we may never know about or understand.

The second incident involved my daughter, Megan, who entered her elementary school's literature contest whose theme was, "Wouldn't it be great if..." Megan chose to submit in the poetry category. The children were asked to describe the inspiration for their submissions. As I read the first line of her beautiful poem, the answer was painfully obvious: "Wouldn't it be great if there was a cure for breast cancer?" I realized that a breast cancer diagnosis never goes away, not for the individual who was diagnosed, nor for family members and friends. It may hover in the background after several "disease-free" years, but it is still there.

Breast cancer IS everywhere. Breast cancer does not take a holiday. Every month is Breast Cancer Awareness Month for VBCF. We need your presence and your support as three breast cancer related bills wind their way through the legislative process (see story on page 1). It is the "warriors with pink ribbons" who make a difference in whether these bills will become law in Virginia. Show that you care by showing up! Without a strong visual presence of women with breast cancer, friends, and family members at all hearings, these bills may not pass. And, when you receive your dues renewal notice for 1998, please support VBCF as generously as you can. We depend upon your membership dues, contributions and donations to continue our efforts to raise awareness about breast cancer and to advocate for an end to this deadly disease. Wouldn't it be truly great if we could find a cure for breast cancer?

In Memoriam

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation extends its deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the following members who died recently.

Sue Durham, Pat Horrell, Helen Howard, Donna Pollard

May we all continue to remember the dead and fight for the living.

VBCF Board of Directors Update

Three new members have been elected to the Board of Directors of the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation. Barbara Dittmeier and Linda Knott, both of Richmond, were voted onto the Board at the September meeting. Karin Noss was elected by the members of the Northern Virginia District as their representative to the Board.

Look for profiles of our three new Board members in the next issue of the VBCF newsletter.

In 1997, the Board received the resignations of past president Margaret Borwhat and Tidewater District Representative Jennie Davies. Many thanks to both of them for their years of service to VBCF.

The Board of Directors has appointed a Nominating Committee and will hold elections for officers and board positions in 1998. In addition to board vacancies, there are openings for District Representatives for the Northwest, Central, and Southwest Districts. If you are interested in serving in any of these positions, Teresa Dayrit, VBCF's Administrative Director, can answer any questions about what is involved in being a district representative. We invite you to attend our board meetings and learn more about our organization. Make a commitment to get involved with VBCF this year. Volunteering for VBCF is a great way to do your part in the fight against breast cancer!
October Activities Raise Breast Cancer Awareness

An extensive number of outreach, special events, and creative educational efforts marked October 1997, Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Members of the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation from all over the Commonwealth gave presentations on breast cancer and the mission of VBCF. Special educational events on breast cancer received a great deal of attention, including media coverage. Information dissemination at professional association meetings reached hundreds of people. What follows is just a brief summary of some of the awareness activities, starting at the top with recognition from Governor and Mrs. Allen.

Governor George Allen and First Lady Susan Allen held a reception at the Executive Mansion on October 30, 1997, recognizing October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The reception brought together people from all over the Commonwealth. The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation is grateful for the leadership and support of the First Lady over the past four years. VBCF members wish her well as she departs the Governor’s Mansion and hope that she will continue to be a strong advocate on breast cancer issues.

VBCF members Judi Ellis, Beblon Parks, and Elizabeth Williams appeared on a local cable television show in Richmond entitled, “Our Stories.” The show was produced by MediaOne and featured the women’s personal experiences with breast cancer. VBCF will obtain a copy of the 30-minute program which will be available to members.


Nearly 100 enthusiastic and energetic women participated in the 4th annual “Dance for the Cause” Jazzercise fund-raiser to benefit VBCF on October 3, 1997. In this fundraising event, participants danced, sang, and had a great time while getting a strenuous workout. At the same time, they joined the fight for a cure for breast cancer. The Jazzercise students and instructors in Richmond and Staunton raised over $14,000 for the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation.

The participants also celebrated Jazzercise instructor and VBCF member Gloria Barnes’ 10th anniversary as a breast cancer survivor. Gloria has been a strong fund raiser for VBCF with her annual Jazzercise event and was very pleased with the money raised for VBCF in her honor. The event was fun and exciting; numerous merchants donated door prizes and Richmond TV personality, Antoineet Essa, helped to bring media attention to the event.

In Staunton, Jazzercise instructor Phyllis Holroyd and her spirited students danced for the cause and raised breast cancer awareness. Staunton Bсудies and VBCF members, Evellee Wheeler, Virginia Sorrells, Mary Byrd, and Virginia Wigglesworth helped to disseminate VBCF literature and breast cancer information. Gloria was excited to see that this event had also taken place in another part of the state.

Gloria Barnes expressed gratitude to the Staunton participants, the Richmond instructors and their students; and to Kathy Fling and VBCF members Becky Morris and Sally Winter for their tireless help. Gloria said that she has set her sights on an even loftier goal for 1998! VBCF is grateful to all participants for their enthusiastic commitment to the fight against breast cancer.

RACE FOR THE CURE® Comes to Virginia

Hundreds of individuals from across Virginia will join together at Richmond’s Bryan Park to run a 5K race against breast cancer on May 9, 1998. RACE FOR THE CURE® is a national co-ed 5K race and 1 mile fun run/walk developed by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation as a method for cities to raise money to fight breast cancer. The Richmond RACE FOR THE CURE® will provide community members to actively show their support for the fight against breast cancer.

Over 77 major U.S. cities participate in this series of 5K fund raising runs. Richmond is the first Virginia city to be awarded a RACE FOR THE CURE® affiliation by the Komen Foundation and participants are expected to come from as far as the Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Roanoke Valley and Tidewater areas.

VBCF encourages our members to get involved either by participating in the event or helping on the sidelines. President Patricia Goodall says “We look forward to participating in this event with other breast cancer activists in the fight against this epidemic.” She urges all members to wear the bright fuschia VBCF T-shirts!!!

For more information on obtaining a T-shirt or helping VBCF disseminate literature at the event, please call (804) 285-1200 or 1-800-345-VBCF. For more information on volunteering for the race, call (804) 553-8718 or contact via email: NORVCOM@AOL.com.
On October 7, 1997, over 250 individuals gathered at The Cornerstone in Richmond to hear national author and oncology surgeon Dr. Susan Love speak about current issues in breast cancer. Dr. Antronette Yancey, Director of Public Health for the City of Richmond, and a former colleague of Dr. Love, introduced her to the audience. Dr. Yancey dedicated her poem, “Big Shoes,” to the celebrated speaker. Following the introduction, Dr. Love bounded enthusiastically onto the stage to begin a breathtaking hour and a half presentation on breast cancer, hormones, medicine, and society.

Dr. Love began the presentation by reminding the audience that medicine is a work in progress and all things in medicine are subject to change. Some of the things that we correlate with an increased risk for breast cancer cannot be explained by science yet. For example, a new study shows that women with bones that are less dense are at lower risk of getting breast cancer and women with bones that are more dense tend to have a greater risk of developing breast cancer. Science does not yet know why this is so. Other factors such as the use of birth control pills and exposure to pesticides do not yet have solid scientific evidence pointing to increased risk of breast cancer.

As to why Dr. Love wrote a book on hormones when her training and passion has been breast cancer, she joked that, “Now that I’m 49 and flashin’, I’ve become interested in hormones.” In keeping with her criticism of how the medical field has treated women, she pointed out that women this stage in life are described as in “reproductive failure.” She also questioned medicine’s definition of menopause as a “disease” of estrogen deficiency. This definition affects society’s perspective on women after the child-bearing years are over. She pointed out that, “If menopause is truly a disease of estrogen deficiency, then all men have it!”

Dr. Love stated that there are some cultures that have no menopause; in Japan, there is not even a word for menopause. There are methods of treatment other than hormone replacement breast cancer.

She argued that these days drugs are always the first step to solving the problem and advocated that women learn more about other options, such as exercise and diet. Exercise over 3 hours a week can decrease the risk of breast cancer by 40%. One’s diet should have more soy, less animal fat and more vegetables. (Many appreciated Dr. Love’s assertion that, “Since chocolate comes from a plant, it therefore can be considered a vegetable!”)

Dr. Love stated that we are beginning to see changes and increased funding due to the efforts of grassroots organizations such as the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation and the National Breast Cancer Coalition. She said that breast cancer is currently a “hot” issue, but she pointed out that we are now at a crucial point. She urged the audience to keep up the advocacy pressure.

Dr. Love recounted a conversation with her nine year old daughter. Her daughter hoped that her mommy would find a cure for breast cancer because, if not, the world was going to be in trouble because she — her daughter — was going to be a ballerina! Dr. Love urged the audience to continue the fight for a cure so that the next generation can follow their dreams of being ballerinas.

Following her presentation, Dr. Love autographed her books (“Dr. Susan Love’s Breast Book” and “Dr. Susan Love’s Hormone Book”) and posed for pictures while members enjoyed the elegant reception.

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation would like to thank the sponsors of this event, Healthsouth Medical Center, Massey Cancer Center at the Medical College of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Ukrop’s Supermarkets Inc., and our media sponsor, Media One.
Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation Honors Dr. Susan Miesfeldt, Recipient Of The Sharon H. Kohlenberg Award

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation presented the 1997 Sherry H. Kohlenberg Healthcare Service Award to Dr. Susan Miesfeldt at the event, “An Evening with Dr. Susan Love.” Larry and Sammy Goldman, husband and nine year old son of the late Sherry Kohlenberg, presented the award to Dr. Miesfeldt.

Dr. Miesfeldt, Assistant Professor of Hematology Oncology at UVA Medical Center, was recognized primarily for her volunteer efforts on behalf of the Women's Health Passport Program, a Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. Dr. Miesfeldt, as part of a group of community leaders, was instrumental in developing the Women's Health Passport Program.

(See related story.)

For a ten dollar fee, women with financial need can choose healthcare practitioners for a clinical breast exam, pelvic exam and mammogram. Dr. Miesfeldt secured funding from the local chapter of the American Cancer Society for the mammograms and set up a screening clinic. She then staffed the clinic herself along with nurse practitioners. Dr. Miesfeldt encouraged many of her colleagues in the medical community to volunteer their services as part of the program.

Currently, the Women’s Health Passport Program in the Thomas Jefferson District has received funding from the Center for Disease Control as one of two pilot programs in Virginia. To date, over 200 women in the district who had financial need were able to gain access to professional screening and mammography with the assistance of volunteers like Dr. Miesfeldt.

Upon receiving the award, Dr. Miesfeldt told the audience that earlier that day she faced the difficult task of telling the family of a 53 year old woman that the physicians had exhausted their treatment options to fight the cancer that had invaded her body. Dr. Miesfeldt was reminded that day why she had gotten involved in the Women's Health Passport Program. Dr. Miesfeldt went on to say that she was very honored to receive the Sharon H. Kohlenberg Healthcare Service Award for 1997 and was pleased to see so many involved in the fight against this disease.

VBCF established the Sharon H. Kohlenberg Healthcare Service Award in 1995 to recognize individuals in the healthcare field who "exhibit a deep and abiding commitment to the fight against breast cancer." The award honors the memory of Sherry Kohlenberg, a healthcare administrator and co-founder of VBCF, who died from breast cancer in 1993.

Women's Health Passport Screening Initiative Evolves Into Statewide Program

by Peggy Brown Paviour & Mary Huff

A local project developed in 1996 to provide breast cancer screenings to underserved women in the Charlottesville region has become part of the Virginia Department of Health's breast and cervical cancer screening program. In 1996, key individuals and health agencies in Charlottesville and the surrounding counties wanted to provide early detection screening exams to lower-income, uninsured and underinsured women. Representatives from two local hospitals, the free clinic, a rural health project and the local health district met for nearly a year to hammer out a unique local program that would be affordable, accessible and confidential.

Their collective effort resulted in a program called the Women’s Health Passport. Women who qualified for the service received a pap smear, clinical breast exam and mammogram for a fee of $10. The “health passports” were purchased through local health departments. Nine participating primary care providers located in the region were available for the clinical exams. Both hospitals in the district, Martha Jefferson Hospital and the University of Virginia Medical Center, provided screening mammograms.

To assure comprehensive care, the committee that established the Women’s Health Passport enlisted a cadre of over 20 medical specialists who agreed to waive their professional fees for women whose screening results indicated the need for further diagnosis and treatment. Within 20 months, 192 women enrolled in the program. Two women were diagnosed and treated for breast cancer.

The Women’s Health Passport co-sponsors were honored as the recipients of the 1996 National Breast Cancer Awareness Month Board of Sponsors’ Gold Award for exemplary community screening and education. Recognition of the program’s effectiveness continues; the Women’s Health Passport is one of two pilot programs that comprise Every Woman's Life, the Virginia Department of Health's breast and cervical cancer screening program.

On October 22, 1997, a press conference was held at the Charlottesville Free Clinic to recognize the community and the individuals who contributed to the program’s success. First Lady of Virginia Susan Allen and breast cancer survivor Sylvia Tyree spoke of the need to reach all women with screening efforts. “Breast cancer is a life-threatening disease and to ignore it is a death sentence,” said Sylvia Tyree. She has taken a leave of absence from her job to inform women, especially those in underserved communities, about breast cancer risk and screening. “I want all women everywhere to give life a chance.”
Central Virginia District - Richmond

VBCF members from the Central Virginia District held a Breast Cancer Awareness Evening at Chester Presbyterian Church on October 28, 1997. The agenda included a demonstration of breast self-examination, cancer etiquette, tips on helping someone with cancer, volunteer opportunities at the Massey Cancer Center, and information about the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation. Approximately 68 men and women attended, and VBCF organizers deemed the evening a success.

On October 28, 1997 the Central Virginia District held a dinner to raise funds for the District's resource guide for women with breast cancer. The dinner was held at Portabella in Petersburg, Wayne Covil of Channel 6 News attended and gathered information about the resource guide and breast cancer. The event raised $1,200 which went to the Petersburg Health Department. The money will be used to fund the distribution of the resource guide to women with breast cancer.

Tidewater District - Va Beach

On October 26, 1997 ten Jewish women's organizations came together to present a program on Understanding the Genetics of Breast Cancer for Jewish Women. The program was held at the Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) and approximately 200 women attended. Featured presenters were Mary Jo Ellis Kahn, RN, MSN, Co-Founder of the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation; Nathan Slotnick, MD, PhD, Director of Reproductive Genetics at the Cancer Genetic Risk Assessment Program, EVMS, Sentara Cancer Institute; and Katherine Teague, MS, Genetic Counselor. The event was funded in part by the Sentara Cancer Institute and the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation. Sponsors included Beth Chaverim Sisterhood, Congregation Beth El Sisterhood, Gomley Chesed Sisterhood, Hadassah, Jewish Women International, KBH Sisterhood, Ohuf Shalom Sisterhood, Temple Emanuel Sisterhood, Temple Israel Sisterhood, Temple Sinai Sisterhood, and Women's American ORT.

Tidewater District - Peninsula

As 1997 drew to a close, VBCF members from the Peninsula Chapter were busier than ever with the local Pink Ribbon Campaign. Under the leadership of Jessie Barrack, one of the 1997 VBCF Volunteers of the Year, chapter members made and distributed 20,000 ribbons around the Peninsula and Greater Williamsburg areas. Thanks to the many individuals and businesses who enthusiastically participated in the program. Special appreciation goes out to Amy Malara who sold T-shirts, tote bags and Breast Cancer Awareness jewelry at her beauty salon in Williamsburg during the month of October. Amy and her staff raised over $150 for VBCF.

In other news, the Peninsula Chapter has elected new officers for 1998. Judy Weatherly will serve as President; Betty O'Connell will serve as Vice President; Shirley Keep will be Treasurer; and Susie Stultz was elected Recording Secretary. A number of other positions have been filled for conducting events, legislative activities, fundraising, membership drives, etc. For a full list of volunteers, please contact Ann Wilson.

Looking ahead to the new year, plans are underway for the Peninsula Chapter's annual Fashion Show and Luncheon. The 1998 event will be held on April 4 at the Omni Newport News. Please call Jennie Davies at (757) 229-9812 for ticket information.

Last, but certainly not least, chapter members bid a sad farewell to Diane Beilharz who moved to Florida in December. Diane has been an enthusiastic member and busy volunteer since the inception of the Peninsula Chapter. Everyone in the chapter genuinely will miss Diane.

Northern District

Karin Noss, Northern Virginia District Representative, participated in two exciting programs. She summarizes her experiences with the U.S. Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program below.

DOD Breast Cancer Research Peer Review Program

As someone who wanted to get more involved with the scientific aspects of breast cancer, I found the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Breast Cancer Research Peer Review Program an outstanding way to do so. When I first read about the program, I knew it was something I had to pursue. After attending the National Breast Cancer Coalition's (NBCC) Project LEAD in November 1996, I submitted an application to the DOD peer review program. I was really excited to learn I'd been selected to participate, but I was intimidated by the more than 50 proposals I was asked to review. I diligently read each proposal, although some were difficult to understand. The intimidation factor persisted until shortly after the
review panel began. Once I realized that the scientists on the panel really did want to hear what we advocates had to say and were willing to explain unclear concepts, I felt much more comfortable. By the end of the panel meeting, I had learned so much and hoped the scientists had also gained a new perspective.

I was also somewhat frustrated to find (at least from the panels on which I participated) that we aren’t closer to new therapies for detection, prevention, and cure. So much research has been done, yet so much more needs to be done. Even though questions remained unanswered, it was heartening to see the dedication of all the participants which made this one of the most worthwhile events I have ever experienced.

Era of Hope Conference

In 1997, U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the U.S. Army Medical Research Material Command conducted a conference entitled “Era of Hope.” The conference provided feedback on research that had been funded in FY92-95 through the DOD Breast Cancer Research Peer Review Program. “Era of Hope” was certainly an appropriate title for a conference providing scientists, clinicians, and advocates feedback on the scientific process. For those of us who sat on one or more DOD Peer Review Panels and wondered if we were really getting closer to answers on detection, prevention, and a cure for breast cancer, this conference gave us that glimmer of hope.

The keynote address by Dr. Mary Claire King, “Eradication of Breast Cancer: Thoughts from the Frontier,” set the stage for the remainder of the conference. Dr. King explained that, in spite of the challenges ahead, increased DOD funding, new technologies, and new professionals joining the field have led to new therapies coming into practice. Over the next three days of the conference, various speakers emphasized advances in screening/detection, including use of digital mammography; identification and characterization of bio-markers; development of breast cancer vaccines; the advent of new hormone therapies; and new study designs which will help get research into the clinic more rapidly.

Controversy sessions, where scientists and clinicians disagreed on the best approach, focused on such topics as mammography for women in their 40’s; efficacy of high dose chemotherapy and stem cell transplantation; and use of tamoxifen and other hormones. The highlight of each day, however, was the translational session conducted by a panel of scientists, clinicians, and National Breast Cancer Coalition President Fran Visco. Each panel member discussed what was most promising and translatable to women dealing with breast cancer. Overall, this was an outstanding educational and networking opportunity for the medical professionals and advocates involved.

Northwest District - Waynesboro

What is a support group? How might a patient benefit from the group? How can professionals benefit from support groups? These and other questions were addressed in a presentation at Augusta Medical Center in Waynesboro on October 16, 1997. The speakers came courtesy of the Cancer Center at the University of the Virginia Medical Center. They were David Catell-Gordons, Director of Community Relations, and Susan R. Goins-Eplee, M.Div., Chaplain, Support Services.

Evelee Wheeler and the Bosom Buddies participated in the Lady Killer Tour and the Jazzercise events. The group distributed about 2,200 pink ribbons as part of the VBCF Pink Ribbon Campaign.

Northwest District - C’ville

There were many Breast Cancer Awareness activities in the Charlottesville area during October.

The Breast Health Coalition of the Blue Ridge distributed 2,000 pink ribbons with information cards and put a banner downtown that reminded women to take action for early detection. A local radio station recorded public service announcements, and articles about breast cancer ran every Sunday in the local paper. Martha Jefferson Hospital (MJH) sponsored an 8-K race in which 200 runners participated.

MJH also provided mammograms, clinical breast exams and breast self-exam lessons to 30 women. The annual Martha’s Market fundraiser event raised about $100,000 for breast cancer outreach activities under the auspices of the Women’s Committee. The University of Virginia Medical Center held a forum on the Centers for Disease Control Consensus Conference on hormone replacement therapy and breast cancer survivors, osteoporosis, and genetics and breast cancer. The University of Virginia Cancer Center hosted Dr. David Spiegel's presentation on the link between cancer survival, quality of life, support groups, and emotional support. The Nelson County Rural Health Outreach hosted a Mother-Daughter breakfast featuring presentations on breast cancer. The Black Nurses Association of Charlottesville presented information on breast cancer following church services at the Mount Eagle Baptist Church.

In Memoriam

On September 25, 1997, Pat Horrell, a co-founder of the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, died from breast cancer. A funeral was held for Pat in Canada, her country of origin. A memorial service, “A Celebration of Life,” was held on October 4, 1997 at the Chest Presbyterian Church allowing the many people who cared about Pat to gather in her honor. Pat Horrell was a major contributor to the establishment and development of VBCF. She is survived by her husband and two teenage children.
1997 Honorary & Memorial Contributions

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation gratefully acknowledges the individuals, companies and organizations, whose generosity continues to make it possible for us to continue our fight against breast cancer.

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In Honor of Gloria Barnes’ 10th Anniversary
Participants of Jazercise 1997

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In Honor of Lillie Levine’s 80th Birthday
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In Honor of Renee Schibner
Sally Todd

In Honor of Dr. Thomas Smith, MD, FACP
The Family of Annette Thomas, Sarah, Erin & Mike

In Honor of Staff of Stony Point Women’s Health
Andrea Porez, M.D.

In Honor of Myrtle Chandler, Dorothy Lanier, Joyce Simmons, Nancy Campbell for 1997 Holiday Season
Anne Shannon-Butcher

In Honor of Their Friends and Colleagues for the 1997 Holiday Season
William & Delores Fogel - X-Ray Medical Center

In Honor of Amy Vest, 1997 Rookie of the Year of Chesterfield County Fire Department
Knights of Columbus

In Honor of Beverly Werbel
Steve & Nancy Schreier

Memorial Contributions
In Memory of Marguerite Allman
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In Memory of Hildegard Borden
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In Memory of Helen Curley Cates
H. Sue Jones

In Memory of Peggy Cates
Paula Dennison
H. Sue Jones
Kathie Spiegel

In Memory of Ed Clark, my father
Paula Dennison

In Memory of Florence Cooke
Mary G. Parrott

In Memory of Howard Caplan’s mother, Ellen November’s mother, Joy Gerson’s husband, Kenneth Grass’ father
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Grossman

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Monte Woodfin
Karen Woodfin-Raaf

In Memory of Judy Thrash
Katherine Spiegel

In Memory of Shirley Udelson
Shirley Jacobs

In Memory of Alice Wiseman
Isadore Ziss

We regret any errors or omissions. Please contact VBCF at 1-800-343-8223 with corrections.
Effects of Radiation Therapy in Premenopausal Women with Breast Cancer Studied

by Mary Huff

In the U.S., the effectiveness of radiation therapy combined with chemotherapy for women treated with lumpectomy (breast conservation surgery) has been well-documented by the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project. In a large study conducted for the project, women diagnosed with breast cancer who met the inclusion criteria were divided into three randomized groups for treatment: 1) lumpectomy without radiation therapy, 2) lumpectomy with radiation therapy, and 3) modified radical mastectomy. The study showed that ten-year survival rates were similar for the group treated with lumpectomy plus radiation and the group treated with mastectomy. The subset treated with lumpectomy had lower survival rates with frequent local recurrence and development of distant metastases.

Some studies of the routine use of radiation therapy as adjuvant treatment for women who have had mastectomy report significant reduction in locoregional recurrences but no improvement in overall survival. Two recently published studies compare the effectiveness of chemotherapy by itself with the use of chemotherapy plus radiation therapy. The studies focused on high-risk premenopausal women previously treated with modified radical mastectomy, tracking the women for periods of ten and fifteen years. What follows are summaries of the studies and their findings.

The Danish Study

The Danish Breast Cancer Cooperative Group recruited patients for their study from 1982 to 1989. High-risk status meant that the patient had either positive lymph nodes at the time of diagnosis, a tumor measuring more than 5 cm or an invasion of the cancer into the skin or muscle of the chest. The definition of premenopausal was absence of menstrual periods for less than five years or hysterectomy before the age of 55 years. None of the patients in this study had distant metastasis.

Initially the group wanted to compare radiation plus cyclophosphamide, methotrexate and fluorouracil chemotherapy (CMF), CMF alone and CMF with tamoxifen. Within four years it was evident that the last subset (CMF with tamoxifen) had a high rate of mortality and that arm of the study was stopped.

The Danish study followed 1708 women for a period of 10 years. Of the research subjects, 852 were randomly assigned to radiation therapy with CMF and 856 were assigned to CMF alone. Nine percent of the women who received radiation with CMF had local, regional or distant recurrence compared with 32% of the group treated with CMF alone. Disease-free survival at ten years was 48% for the radiation plus CMF group compared to 34% for the CMF alone group. Overall survival at ten years was 54% for the radiation plus CMF group compared to 48% for the CMF alone group. Researchers concluded that the addition of radiation therapy to chemotherapy in high-risk premenopausal women treated with mastectomy prolongs survival and decreases the incidence of locoregional recurrences.

The Canadian Study

From 1978 through 1986, a group of oncologists in British Columbia, Canada, recruited 318 premenopausal patients with positive lymph nodes who previously were treated with modified radical mastectomy. Of the research subjects, 164 were randomly assigned to radiation therapy plus CMF and 154 were assigned to CMF alone. The patients were followed for 15 years.

At 15 years, 13% of the radiation plus CMF group had locoregional recurrence compared to 33% of the CMF alone group. Fifty percent of the radiation plus CMF group had disease-free survival at 15 years compared to 33% of the CMF alone group. Overall survival was 54% for the radiation plus CMF group compared to 46% for the CMF alone group. The study authors concluded that radiation therapy combined with chemotherapy following mastectomy reduced the incidence of locoregional recurrence and reduced mortality.

What Does It Mean?

What are the implications of these studies for the treatment of breast cancer in the U.S. today? Consider some recent trends in breast cancer treatment in the U.S. A survey of medical practices conducted by the American College of Surgeons showed a trend toward earlier diagnosis of breast cancer, resulting in smaller tumors and less lymph node involvement. The number of invasive breast cancers less than 2 cm in diameter increased from 28% in 1983 to 36% in 1990. The incidence of regional lymph node involvement at diagnosis has decreased from 38% to 31%. Hopefully this trend has continued over the last seven years and women are being diagnosed at earlier stages of disease. In addition, breast cancer treatment has changed over the years. Premenopausal women usually are treated with adjuvant chemotherapy regardless of lymph node status. Chemotherapeutic regimens for women with positive lymph nodes include more drugs than ever before. Supportive therapy has also advanced with the introduction of new antiemesis drugs, granulocytic stimulating factors and more knowledge of the positive effects steroids have in decreasing the severity of adverse side-effects from chemotherapy drugs. More women are being treated with breast conserving surgical intervention combined with radiation therapy. For the first time in 30 years mortality rates in some subsets of women with breast cancer have decreased.
Acupuncture Endorsed by NIH Panel

A panel of experts selected by the National Institutes of Health endorsed the use of acupuncture to control the nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy. The alternative treatment is also effective in treating pain following surgery and dental procedures, according to Dr. David Ramsay, chairman of the NIH panel. Dr. Ramsay said the twelve experts on the NIH panel reviewed studies of acupuncture that met the standards of Western science. American physicians who are specially trained and certified in the ancient Chinese medical practice hope that the NIH panel endorsement will encourage more insurance companies to include acupuncture in their policies.

Source: Associated Press, Nov. 6, 1997

Oncologists’ Survey Shows Extensive Use of Off-Label Prescriptions

A survey of 200 oncologists nationwide shows extensive use of cancer fighting drugs for off-label prescriptions, i.e., purposes other than those listed in the Physicians’ Desk Reference (PDR) or the drug package insert. The study was designed by the American Enterprise Institute and the American Cancer Society. It was conducted by a New York City market research firm, Roper Starch Worldwide.

According to a representative of the Roper Division, oncologists prescribe off-label to help their patients. The study showed that the majority of oncologists do not feel the Food and Drug Administration knows what combinations of chemotherapeutic drugs are best for their patients and do not usually use the PDR (which lists the FDA drug labeling information) when deciding on cancer therapies. Jack Calfee, Ph.D., resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, estimates that 60% of practicing oncologists prescribe off-label. The majority of the physicians participating in the survey disagreed with the view that information from pharmaceutical companies could be misleading and should be prohibited. However, the majority agreed that FDA influence in the quality control of drug manufacturing was very useful and served its purpose.

Source: Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Vol. 89, No 16, August 20, 1997

Assessing Uterine Changes in Women Taking Tamoxifen

In the March 1995 issue of Contemporary OB/GYN, Dr. Steven Goldstein reviewed the documented effects of tamoxifen on the endometrium or lining of the uterus. He writes that a small percentage of postmenopausal women on tamoxifen may develop proliferation of the endometrial lining, polyps and even adenocarcinoma. Such patients usually will be free of symptoms and will not have bleeding. Dr. Goldstein feels that simple blind biopsy of the endometrium will not diagnose focal pathology (abnormal cells that are only in small areas). He recommends vaginal ultrasound to visualize the entire lining of the uterus. Normally, a postmenopausal woman on tamoxifen will have atrophic endometrium (thinning of the lining). If the lining is not consistently thin, he suggests saline infusion sonohysterography, which is saline infused directly into the uterus during ultrasound to visualize polyps or masses. If endometrial pathology is found, a D&C would be appropriate.

NURSES ON-CALL LIVE

From April 20-24 the Oncology Nursing Society will host a toll-free hotline, 1-888-4-ANEMIA, to answer questions and offer free assistance on fatigue and anemia. This program is being supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Ortho Biotech Inc.
**Membership in the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation**

**Annual Dues Information**

- **New**
  - Basic $15
  - Family $20
  - Supporter $25
  - Courtesy (available if unable to pay membership fee)

- **Renewal**
  - Friend $15
  - Patron $20
  - Sponsor Greater than $100

If you would like an acknowledgement card sent, please indicate name and address of recipient.

**Contribution**

This gift is in memory of...

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Please fill out form and return with your check to VBCF volunteer.

**Thank you for your support!**

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Consult your tax advisor concerning tax deductibility.

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**Calendar**

**March 1**
VBCF Board Retreat
10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
The Virginia Diocesan Center at Roslyn

**March 14**
VBCF Board Meeting
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Main Conference Room

**April 4**
Peninsula Chapter Fashion Show and Luncheon
Omni Hotel - Newport News

**April**
VBCF Annual Membership Meeting
Date and location to be announced

**May 9**
Richmond Race for the Cure
Bryan Park, Richmond

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**Newsletter**

This newsletter is published by the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation; focusing on breast cancer issues and the activities of VBCF members. Should you wish to join VBCF, or have any editorial comments, please call 1-800-345-VBCF or write to: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation
PO Box 17884
Richmond, VA 23226

Pati Goodall
President
Mary Huff, RN
Medical Review
Dana Johnson
Editor
Lauri Mobley
Design and Typography

Contributors to this issue:
Wanda Bruce
Teresa Dayrit
Ann Wilson
Nancy Schreier

Photos by:
Wanda Bruce
Teresa Dayrit
Nancy Krause Golden
Nancy Schreier
Ann Wilson

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**It's time we found a cure!**