THE RIGHT OF POLITICAL PASSAGE

Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act
Signed by President Clinton

President William Jefferson Clinton signed the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act on October 24, 2000. This law, which the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation in partnership with the National Breast Cancer Coalition and its members worked hard to pass, will guarantee treatment to low-income, uninsured women screened and diagnosed with breast and cervical cancer through a federal program. As part of a united grassroots effort, VBCF members called and met with legislators asking for support for this bill. Legislators were deluged with phone calls and faxes from concerned constituents who wanted this bill voted on and passed.

Until passage of this legislation, low-income, uninsured women, many of whom are among the working poor, could be screened free of charge through a federally funded program, but were not guaranteed treatment once diagnosed. Under this bill, states would have the option to enroll women diagnosed through the program in Medicaid to receive the treatment and services they need. States that choose to provide breast and cervical cancer treatment as an optional benefit would receive an enhanced match from the federal government.

In January 2001, VBCF representatives Gloria Rogers-Bruse, Teresa Dayrit, Karin Noss and Beth Williams were invited to the White House to celebrate the passage of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act. Newly-elected Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton commended breast cancer activists for their passion and determination and remembered when a bus full of breast cancer advocates broke down on the way to a meeting with the President Bill Clinton at the White House for the Women's Health Initiative

 Clintons in Williamsburg. The determined group of women hitch hiked on the highway and rode in with truckers, police cars and other friendly drivers to get to the meeting on time. Senator Clinton said it was a perfect metaphor for the resolve demonstrated of breast cancer activists from across the nation.

Tonia Conine, a woman who had been diagnosed with breast cancer through the federal screening program, had the honor of introducing President Bill Clinton. President Clinton who had included this bill in his FY 2001 budget said that he was pleased to sign this bipartisan legislation into law. He pointed out, "Women without health insurance are 40 percent more likely to die from breast cancer than those who are insured." Not only are they less likely to be screened, but the course of treatment they elect is often affected by their ability to pay for services. This important legislation will expand the limited treatment options now available to low-income, uninsured women with breast cancer who are in the unique situation of learning about their condition through federally sponsored screening programs."

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This year is an exciting one for VBCF - it is our 10th year anniversary. As with most not-for-profit organizations, VBCF had humble beginnings. In a desire to do more to raise overall awareness of breast cancer, our original founders, four women who met in a breast cancer support group, established VBCF in 1991. Early meetings were held around kitchen tables in individual homes. The first VBCF sponsored event was an awareness rally on the grounds of the State Capitol on Mother's Day in 1991. Approximately 50 individuals attended - mostly friends and family of the founders but the press was there! VBCF brought the public's attention to the disease.

I first became acquainted with VBCF in 1996. Following my own treatment in early 1995, I moved to Richmond to join my then fiancé. Upon arrival, I planned a wedding, started a new career and began to think how to incorporate my diagnosis of breast cancer into my life. I stumbled across VBCF when I saw an article in the local paper looking for volunteers to staff a model home designed by and for women. Proceeds from touring the home were designated for VBCF. Icalled to volunteer my time. Two years later I was asked to join the Board and this past year I was elected to fulfill the term of Jennie Davies as President.

From my first introduction to VBCF, I have been impressed with the accomplishments of the organization. Because of VBCF's involvement, "drive-thru" mastectomies are no longer allowed and insurance companies must cover plastic surgery on the opposite breast for symmetry. The recent passage of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act, which guarantees treatment to low-income, uninsured women screened through a federal program, is an example of our most recent success. Working closely with the National Breast Cancer Coalition, VBCF has lobbied diligently and successfully for increased funding for breast cancer research. Since the birth of grassroots advocacy, federal funding for breast cancer research has increased six fold!

Over the next 12 months, you will be hearing in greater detail "The VBCF Story" as we kick off our 10th Anniversary Campaign. Our goal is to increase the awareness of our organization throughout the Commonwealth. The highlight of the year will be a 10th Anniversary Gala to be held in early October in Richmond. I hope you will join us to celebrate our accomplishments and support our work for the ultimate goal.

Because, despite all of our accomplishments, the greatest day for VBCF will be the day we cease to exist - for on that day a cure will have been found!

Barbara Dittmeier, President
Karin Noss, Vice President
Linda Strickland, Treasurer
Elizabeth Williams, Secretary
Joy Galloni
Libby Gatewood
Patricia Goodall
Becky Morris
Bebon Parks
Frank Poynter
Southwestern Virginia District Representative
Gloria Rogers-Bruse
Leslie Rosen
Gay Rudis
Central Virginia District Representative
Judy Weatherly
Tidewater District Representative
Ann Wilson

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation is a grassroots organization committed to the eradication of breast cancer through education and advocacy.

Educate □ Advocate □ Eradicate
CHESSTER TRI-CITIES CHAPTER

It isn't every day the sheriff, vice mayor, or even your doctor brings dinner to you and asks if you need anything else! This is exactly what happened at Swift Creek Mill in October to supporters of Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation. Donald Hunter, sheriff of Prince George County; Joe Hale, vice mayor of Colonial Heights; and Dr. Joe Lemming, were three of the local dignitaries. Delegate Kirk Cox and Channel 6 newswoman Wayne Cavel wore white shirts with black bow ties and carried food to the diners also.

For the last five years, Libby Gatewood and the Chester Tri-Cities Chapter in cooperation with Chef Andy Howell have hosted this Celebrity Wait Staff Dinner. Chef Howell prepares the delicious gourmet dinner and the wait staff donates all tips to VBCF. This year the dignitaries added local flavor and awareness to our Southside localities. Wayne Cavel has volunteered his time all five years, and Delegate Kirk Cox was appreciated more than usual this year. He introduced the bill for the VBCF license plate; the plate was on display that night with sign up information. Friends, families, cancer survivors, dignitaries and celebrities joined together bringing awareness and raising funds for the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation.

PENINSULA CHAPTER

The Peninsula Chapter of VBCF held its annual awards banquet on October 10, 2000. Husbands and friends enjoyed this special evening with us. One of the highlights of the evening was the announcement that the annual golf tournament, chaired by Dolores and Bill Speight, raised $3,200 for VBCF.

October also saw us placing pink ribbons around the community. Approximately 4,000 ribbons were distributed this year.

Many education events were held this fall. Chapter members Susan Calver, Jeannie Harrell, Christine Lourance, Micah Johnson, Marchetta Delamorton, Brenda Forbes, Jessie Barrack, Nancy Hopkins, Dolores Speight, Sally Taylor, Eunice Fenwick, Ann Wilson and Sudie Stultz staffed the literature tables.

Our November meeting was our annual fun meeting including

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RICHMOND CHAPTER

Public awareness was the fall theme for the Richmond chapter. In September, Sherri Biggerstaff hosted a Breast Self Exam class at the Memorial Regional Medical Center.

Our pink ribbon campaign was very successful in 2000. Betsy Secrist served as the project coordinator and Sherri Biggerstaff was our decorating consultant. Two basket-decorating parties were held in September and over 100 baskets were distributed to area businesses.

Betsy Secrist and Gay Rudis staffed a literature table at the American Cancer Society Luncheon held as part of their "Think Pink" campaign. Over 25 pink...
2001: VBCF 10TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

We’re proud that VBCF has been a national and state leader in the fight against breast cancer for 10 years! In the coming months we will be sharing the story of VBCF’s history with highlights of successes in the battle against this deadly disease, as well as our plans for a future with no breast cancer. Look for “The VBCF Story” in an upcoming issue of this newsletter, as well as announcements about special 2001 events we are planning.

Come to a special annual meeting/reception in May honoring VBCF’s dedicated volunteers and members who have supported us from our earliest “kitchen table” days. Our very first breast cancer event, a “Mother’s Day Rally for A Cure” was held on the grounds of the State Capitol in 1991. In October we will host an elegant masked ball to celebrate VBCF’s accomplishments during its 10 years in the fight against breast cancer.

This is a special year for all of us at VBCF and we invite you to share our pride in the significant role that we have played in the lives of Virginians affected by breast cancer. To accomplish VBCF’s ultimate goal, “nothing less than true prevention and a cure,” we must build a solid foundation. VBCF has historically relied on membership fees, donations, and grants to support our staff and its activities. But there is much to do and we are growing! Thus, it is with great anticipation that we will introduce 2001: VBCF’s 10th Year Anniversary Campaign. When you receive materials about this special 10th Year Anniversary Campaign, please show your support of VBCF and the fight against breast cancer by responding generously.

We look forward to an eventful year, both for VBCF and its members and in the fight against this disease.

LIGHTING THE WAY INTO THAT DARK NIGHT

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation ended Breast Cancer Awareness Month 2000 with a candle lighting ceremony, “Lighting the Way Into That Dark Night.” The message of the event was to continue to raise awareness and advocate for a cure. VBCF believes that it takes a community to find a cure for breast cancer. By coalescing the efforts of researchers, healthcare professionals, activists, policy makers and women living with breast cancer, we fight so that others especially future generations will know a cure.

In partnership with the Virginia Motorcyclists Against Cancer, VBCF kicked off the ceremony with a motorcycle parade down Richmond’s Monument Avenue. Breast cancer activists rode through the city with 75 motorcycle owners in a rousing effort to bring attention to the disease.

PARKS DUFFEY PAINTING COMMEMORATES VBCF’S 10 YEAR FIGHT

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation has commissioned a painting by Parks Pegram Duffey, III to commemorate its 10 years in the fight against breast cancer. The painting, with the Virginia State Capitol as a focal point, depicts VBCF’s efforts to make breast cancer a state and national healthcare priority.

There are 250 limited edition prints, which are personally numbered and signed by Parks Duffey. They are available on a first come, first serve basis. The limited edition prints sell for $90. In addition, standard prints are available for $45. For more information call 804-285-1200 or 800-345-8223.
VBCF HONORS DAVID M. RANDOLPH, MD WITH THE 2000 SHARON H. KOHLENBERG HEALTHCARE SERVICE AWARD

On Saturday, October 28, 2000, the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation (VBCF) was pleased to present the Sharon H. Kohlenberg Healthcare Service Award to David Marcus Randolph, MD, medical director of the Radiation Oncology Department at the Lewis Gale Oncology Center in Salem, Virginia. Dr. Randolph was honored at VBCF's Breast Cancer Awareness Month event on the grounds of the State Capitol in Richmond.

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." Recipients of this award are recognized for having gone "above and beyond" the call of duty. Not only do they provide quality diagnosis, care and/or treatment for individuals who are diagnosed with or at risk of breast cancer, they advocate for access to healthcare and increased research for better treatments and ultimately a cure. The award also honors the memory of Sherry Kohlenberg, a healthcare administrator and co-founder of VBCF, who died from breast cancer in 1993.

The individual who nominated this year's recipient wrote, "The compassion and dedication that Dr. Randolph has for his patients is equaled by very few. Dr. Randolph deserves this award for many reasons: his continued involvement with our screening program, his support of public and physician education of new treatment options and his dedication to quality patient care. When his patients are too sick to see him, Dr. Randolph makes house calls for no additional charge. His concern is always for the individual's health regardless of financial status. As a promoter of community education and early detection, Dr. Randolph participates in all of the hospital's free screening programs. In addition, he has given up several Saturdays to go off-site to conduct educational programs or conduct screening programs." VBCF was pleased to present this year's Sharon H. Kohlenberg Award to such a compassionate physician who strives to provide quality care to all of his patients.

LIGHTING THE WAY INTO THAT DARK NIGHT

Members then rallied on the grounds of the State Capitol to hear inspiring speeches from representatives of the breast cancer community such as oncologist, Dr. Tom Smith; policy maker, Delegate Kristen Amundson; a woman who had been diagnosed, Karin Noss and a son of a woman living with the disease, Kyle Parks.

VBCF also honored Dr. David Randolph of Columbia Lewis-Gale Hospital with the Sharon H. Healthcare Service Award. After reminding the audience to not go silently into that dark night, Sherry's son Sam Goldman and his father presented Dr. Randolph with the award. Following the presentation, audience members then lit their candles while Liz Marks led them in an uplifting rendition of "Lean on Me."

After the ceremony, participants attended a lovely reception in Old City Hall during which a beautiful painting by Richmond artist Parks Duffey commemorating VBCF's 10-year fight against breast cancer was unveiled.

Below: A group photo taken at the Lighting the Way Into That Dark Night
In the 2001 session of the Virginia General Assembly, Senator Patsy Ticer (D - Alexandria) and Delegate Kristen Amundson (D - Mt. Vernon), both of whom have been diagnosed with breast cancer, introduced the Virginia Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act of 2001. This legislation proposes that Virginia provides Medicaid coverage for women who are screened and diagnosed with breast and cervical cancer through the federal screening program.

At a recent press conference at the State Capitol, Senator Ticer said, “This bill will end the current tragic situation where low-income women in our state get help for their early detection screenings, but have nowhere to turn if their screenings detect cancer. Why pay for screenings if they’re only giving women a death sentence?” She continued, “We must promote detection with a purpose. We must stand for providing coverage to these women who need treatment.”

Delegate Amundson added, “With the federal government picking up 66 percent of the bill, how can the General Assembly say no? I was lucky. When I found out that I had breast cancer, I had treatment options as an insured woman. I cannot fathom telling other women in a similar situation that we just could not fund that extra 34 cents on a dollar to pass this law.”

Senator Janet Howell (D - Reston) and Delegate Phil Hamilton (R - Newport News) agree. They are sponsoring a budget amendment to pay for Ticer’s and Amundson’s proposal. A University of Virginia study estimated the cost of implementation to be roughly $350,000 annually in order to receive $700,000 in federal money. (The federal government will provide a 66 percent reimbursement to Virginia for all costs associated with adopting this new Medicaid coverage option.)

Ginger Easley, breast and cervical cancer case manager for Central Piedmont Health Services - a federally qualified health center that provides access to primary care to low-income and uninsured Virginians in Danville, Martinsville and Pittsylvania county areas spoke movingly about the women in her clinic that would benefit from this bill. She said that right now, their best option for charity treatment is more than six hours away. “For a woman needing daily chemotherapy for breast cancer, the last thing she needs is the added stress of such inaccessible care.” She continued, “Long rides, long delays, long distances should not be the norm for these women. I ask our state to make passage of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act a top priority.”

Breast cancer advocates and supporters of women’s health initiatives were then able to thank President Clinton and Secretary of Health Donna Shalala for the administration’s commitment to fight against breast cancer. VBCF Board member, Beth Williams says, “It was exciting to meet the President and Senator Clinton who said that her door would always be open to breast cancer activists.” She said,

From left to right: Karin Noss, Beth Williams, Teresa Dayrit, Gloria Rogers-Bruse

“Hearing Tonia’s story made all of those trips to DC worthwhile, knowing that that other women won’t have to face what she did.”

Breast cancer advocates were also successful in getting $175 million for the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program for the fiscal year 2001. In addition, advocacy also led President Bill Clinton to sign an Executive Memorandum requiring that Medicare cover all routine patient care costs for Medicare beneficiaries participating in approved clinical trials, negating the need for Congressional action.

Because of the hard work and dedication of breast cancer activists, the 106th Congress passed strong legislation that would significantly impact women diagnosed with breast cancer and support research for better treatment and eventually a cure. VBCF looks forward to continuing to advocate for strong breast cancer legislation statewide and nationally this year - and we have earned our right for passage.
The VBCF Resource library is now open to the public offering Internet access for conducting research as well as numerous books, videos and tapes. The library has expanded to contain over 100 volumes. Below is a sampling of what can be found in the library.

ADVOCACY

Patient No More, Sharon Batt

"Patient No More" tells the politics of cancer in more human terms than they have ever been told. Her description of the new movement of breast cancer activism shows those with breast cancer, other cancers, and those with other critical and chronic diseases, a new model of being ill without accepting the passivity of being "patient."

LYMPHEDEMA


This book gives clear information on what lymphedema is and why it occurs. It describes treatment procedures to suit a range of needs and emphasizes that lymphedema can be treated successfully. Even more valuable, it gives patients hope for their futures. They will know that they are not alone, and that there are many avenues of help and support available.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

Living on the Margins, Women Writers on Breast Cancer

In this anthology, eighteen women writers - novelists, poets, journalists, editors, and scholars - address their personal experiences with breast cancer. Insights sharpened and narrative powers intensified, they offer us hope, understanding, and the spirit of kinship that only good literature can impart.

The Feisty Woman's Breast Cancer Book, Elaine Ratner

"The Feisty Woman's Breast Cancer Book" presents a fresh, thoughtful and independent perspective on meeting the challenges of breast cancer. It navigates the emotional and psychological landscape surrounding breast cancer. Ratner challenges many popular assumptions about cancer statistics, self-image, and treatment and post-treatment options - issues on the mind of every woman with breast cancer. And while she is unafraid to give guidance and share her choices, her advice is not about what you should choose but about how to choose, and how to make sure your choices are heard and respected.

POST TREATMENT

Living Beyond Breast Cancer A Survivor's Guide For When Treatment Ends and the Rest of Your Life Begins, Marisa C. Weiss, MD and Ellen Weiss

This book will help you manage your ongoing relationships with your health care team; keep track of the tests you need to monitor your health; make treatment decisions for reconstruction, tamoxifen, complementary medicine, or pain management; and handle the lingering side effects of treatments, such as hair loss, weight gain, and fatigue. You'll also learn how to deal

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Please stop by to check out these or any other titles in our library. The VBCF office is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and staff is available to assist with Internet research.

Many thanks to the Richmond Race for the Cure for its generous grant to expand the VBCF library.

VIDEOS:

Focus on Healing Through Movement and Dance For the Breast Cancer Survivor

Using the Lebed Method this videotape is a program of exercises specifically designed to meet the needs of breast cancer survivors of all ages and fitness levels. It will help you regain full range of motion, reduce the risk of lymphedema, and improve self image.

My Mom Has Breast Cancer

This unique tape is narrated by clinical psychologist H. Elizabeth King, Ph.D. Also included are interviews with four mothers who have survived breast cancer and their seven children. Dr King offers an honest and empathetic approach to the challenges of families sharing the diagnosis, handling the treatment and helping children cope. The interviews, which provide insight from the children's perspective, make this videotape especially valuable as a coping tool for kids.

Three Days Out: A Breast Cancer Odyssey, narrated by Jobeth Williams

"Three Days Out" chronicles the emotional and physical struggles of four women who are facing breast cancer. Based on a wilderness retreat experience, these women participate in a series of ropes courses designed to mirror the challenges brought on by their diagnoses. "Three Days Out" weaves these stories together into an intimate portrait of women's contemporary issues, revealing their innermost struggles, fears and hopes for their lives.
14TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT RAISES $16,000 FOR VBCF

Enthusiastic women golfers gathered on a July morning to play in the 14th Annual Women's Memorial Golf Tournament at Highland Springs Golf Course. The popular golf tournament benefits VBCF and is held in memory of loved ones who died from breast cancer and in honor of those fighting this devastating disease. Golfers from Virginia and as far as Texas, North Carolina and Maryland came to participate in friendly competition and camaraderie while supporting VBCF's work in the fight against breast cancer.

Organizer, Sharon Talarico, said, "Area small businesses and entrepreneurs took up the challenge and generously gave to this Virginia-based breast cancer advocacy organization. Our neighbors showed real support for this very important cause." Headline sponsors of the event were J. Emerson’s Fine Wines and Cheeses; Kimberley Walls, D.D.S.; Cynthia Barnett, in memory of Stephanie Steiger; and Carol Brissette, in memory of Gayle Doherty. This year, Sharon, her troupe of dedicated volunteers, 112 players and over 50 businesses and individuals raised an impressive $16,000 for VBCF.

Patricia Goodall, VBCF co-founder, accepted the check on behalf of the organization. She commended the organizers and contributors for all their hard work and for their success in continually surpassing the amount of money raised in the previous year. Goodall introduced her teenage daughter Megan Strawderman and pointed out "that the organization was founded so that future generations would not have to contend with this deadly disease and with the help of the Annual Women's Memorial Golf Tournament, we are closer to this goal!"

JAZZERCISE FUND RAISER

Dancing to the theme of "We’ll Remember in November - VOTE - To Eradicate Breast Cancer", on October 8, 100 women and men participated in the 7th annual Dance for the Cause at the Jewish Community Center. VBCF member Gloria Barnes coordinated the event. Glo is a 12-year breast cancer survivor, Jazzercise instructor, and was the 2000 Central Virginia Local Hero for the Ultimate Drive. The 2000 event also featured the internationally known Jazzercise instructor Sal Saccullo. In addition to leading the routines, Sal also serenaded the audience. This was a very special treat and we have invited Sal back for the 2001 event.

The 2000 event raised more than $19,000 for the VBCF bringing the seven-year total to more than $77,000. Many thanks to Gloria Barnes, the Richmond area Jazzercise instructors, all the participants and local merchants who donated prizes for supporting the VBCF and helping us to raise awareness.

PENINSULA CHAPTER

"Easy Christmas Decorating", Member Martha Stephens presented an enjoyable program.

Officers for 2001 were nominated at the November meeting and elected in December: President - Sally Taylor; Vice President - Brenda Forbes; Secretary, Dolores Speight; Treasurer - Joyce Campbell. Other positions filled for 2001 include: Historian - Jean Minor; Public Education - Miciah Johnson; Publications - Sodie Stultz; Membership - Diane Beilharz; Pink Ribbons - Effie Terry; Fund Raising - Ann Wilson; and Legislation - Judy Weatherly.

The December program was presented by Nancy Mortar from Dilon Technologies, Inc. who spoke about the Gamma-Ray camera which uses nuclear imaging to screen for breast cancer.

Also in December members sold candles on weekends at Patrick Henry Mall to benefit VBCF.

"Celebrate Spring and Fashion," the annual luncheon-fashion show, will be presented at the Omni, Newport News, on Saturday, March 31, 2001, beginning at 11:30 a.m. An exciting Silent Auction is also part of this gala event. Fashions and commentary will be provided again by Paige’s, now of Stony Point Shopping Center, Richmond, Virginia. Tickets are $25 each. Please contact Ann Wilson, 757-380-8500, if you are interested in tickets.

Hand stiched gift designed and made by Sally Taylor, presented to Ann Wilson
NCI AWARDS BREAST CANCER RESEARCH GRANTS DERIVED FROM POSTAGE STAMP SALES

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) awarded a total of $6.7 million in two-year grants to 31 applicants (with one more pending final approval) to support novel or innovative research into the area of breast cancer. This Insight Grant Program was designed to encourage investigators to explore areas of research that are underrepresented.

One of the central aims of these grants is to challenge existing paradigms and to develop new methodologies and technologies in breast cancer research that will be seeds for future discovery. It is expected that many of the researchers whose projects are supported by these grants will then compete for traditional grants and generate concepts or products that will have a direct application to public health.

Monies were raised through an act of Congress in 1997 that allowed contributions to breast cancer research funding through the purchase of a first-class stamp for 40 cents. Seventy percent of the net proceeds were set aside for breast cancer research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), of which NCI is a part, with the remaining portion going to the Department of Defense.

Approximately $1 million more in stamp sales proceeds are expected to be received by the NIH before the end of 2000. This installment of funds will be used to award additional grant applications from those previously reviewed. Congress has recently renewed the two-year act that made this program possible and will permit an additional two-year sales period of the stamps.

“Here are over a dozen critical areas of breast cancer research that will benefit from this innovative funding and help us answer some scientific questions, as well as set up research opportunities for the next five to 10 years,” said Richard D. Klausner, M.D., NCI director. He also noted that the breast cancer stamp has helped to sharpen the focus on breast cancer research, due in large part to the efforts of breast cancer survivors, their families and friends.

NIH CONSENSUS PANEL RECOMMENDS A RANGE OF ADJUVANT THERAPIES

Treatment with a combination of chemotherapy drugs improves survival and should be recommended for most women with localized breast cancer, according to a consensus panel convened by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The panel also recommended hormonal therapy for women whose tumors have estrogen receptors, and radiation therapy for women who have had mastectomies and who are at high risk for recurrence of cancer.

These and other recommendations emerged from a three-day NIH Consensus Development Conference on Adjuvant Therapy for Breast Cancer held November 1-3, 2000, at the NIH in Bethesda, Md. Adjuvant therapy - treatments used in addition to surgery to kill cancer cells that may have begun to spread to other organs - includes chemotherapy and hormonal therapy, typically tamoxifen. In addition to these systemic therapies, radiation therapy is sometimes used as a local adjuvant treatment to help destroy breast cancer cells that have spread to nearby tissues.

“Clinical trials over the past 10 years have contributed an enormous amount of new information about adjuvant therapies,” said panel chair Patricia Eifel, M.D., professor of Radiation Oncology at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. “Women with breast cancer have more treatment options and a better chance of surviving their disease than ever before. At the same time, making treatment decisions has become a more complex process for them and their physicians due to a growing list of effective options.”

The conference brought together national and international experts to clarify, for clinicians, patients, and the general public, key questions regarding the selection of treatments, quality of life and new research directions in adjuvant therapy.

Dr. Eifel and her colleagues noted that decisions about the choice of adjuvant therapy should be based on age, tumor size, presence or absence of hormone receptors, presence or absence of cancerous lymph nodes and other generally accepted factors. New technologies and molecular markers hold potential but require further study.

The panel recommended hormonal therapy for women whose breast tumors contain estrogen receptors, regardless of age, menopausal status, tumor size, or whether the cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes. Five years of tamoxifen is currently the standard adjuvant hormonal therapy.

The panel noted that no data support the use of tamoxifen for longer than five years outside of a clinical trial but that this is an important area for investigation. The panel emphasized that hormonal therapy is not indicated for women whose tumors do not have hormone receptors. The panel recommended chemotherapy with a combination of drugs for most pre- and post-menopausal women regardless of lymph node involvement or estrogen receptor status. However, there are not enough data to support the routine use of taxanes or dose-intensive chemotherapy.

Women who have undergone a mastectomy and who have four or more cancerous lymph nodes or an advanced primary tumor benefit from post-surgical radiation, the panel concluded. The panel added that it is unclear whether women with one to three cancerous lymph nodes benefit from

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radiation therapy and that this question should be
tested in a randomized clinical trial.

Adjuvant treatments often involve serious
short- and long-term side effects such as premature
menopause, weight gain, mild memory loss and
fatigue. The panel recommended that selected trials
of adjuvant therapy include quality-of-life measures.
It emphasized that long term follow-up of women in
these trials is important to fully understand the
effects of adjuvant therapies. It also endorsed con-
tinued development of decision-making tools to help
patients and their physicians weigh the risks and
benefits of adjuvant treatments.

Among its other recommendations for
future research, the panel called for carefully
designed studies of:

- combined hormonal therapy
- hormonal therapy versus chemotherapy in pre-
  menopausal women whose tumors have estro-
  gen receptors
- high dose chemotherapy
- taxanes
- factors that predict the effectiveness of treat-
  ments in individual patients
- new drugs, including trastuzumab and bisphos-
 phonates
- radiation techniques that reduce the dose to
  normal tissue such as the heart and lungs
- the effectiveness and side effects of adjuvant
  therapies in women older than 70

The National Cancer Institute and the NIH
Office of Medical Applications of Research spon-
sored the conference. Cosponsors included the
National Institute of Nursing Research and the NIH
Office of Research on Women’s Health.

The full NIH Consensus Statement on
Adjuvant Therapy for Breast Cancer is available by
calling 1-888-NIH-CONSENSUS (1-888-644-
2667) or by visiting the NIH Consensus
Development Program Web site at http://consen-
sus.nih.gov. (The panel’s draft statement was posted
to the Web on November 3, 2000.)
Contribution

A contribution of $__________________________ is enclosed.

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☐ Renewal

☐ Courtesy (available if unable to pay membership fee)

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☐ Family $25

☐ Friend $100

☐ Sponsor $250

☐ Patron $500

☐ Benefactor $1000

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☐ Please contact me about becoming a VBCF volunteer.

This newsletter, published by the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, focuses on breast cancer issues and the activities of VBCF members. If you wish to join VBCF, or have any editorial comments, please call 1-800-345-VBCF or write to: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, 5001 W. Broad St., Suite 201, Richmond, VA 23230.

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