

Awareness helps meet cancer threat head on

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Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center

Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a time to pin on your pink ribbon and show your support.

Health observances like Breast Cancer Awareness Month are designed to increase the community's awareness about important health issues. Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among women in this country (other than skin cancer).

Each year, more than 211,000 American women learn they have this disease (National Cancer Institute). Since National Breast Cancer Awareness Month's beginning in 1985 the focus has been on early detection and intervention for breast cancer.

The American Cancer Society is just one of many national public service organizations that will join forces during the month of October to spread the message that early detection of breast cancer followed by prompt treatment saves lives.

Prevention and early intervention with breast cancer includes having the recommended screenings, knowing your body, knowing your risks, and reducing the risk factors that you have control of.

The goal of screening exams for early breast cancer detection is to find cancers before they start causing symptoms. Screening means using tests and exams to find diseases such as cancer before they cause symptoms. Early detection means finding the cancer as early in the process as possible so that treatment and intervention can be started as soon as possible. Breast cancers that are discovered after problems develop tend to be larger and more likely to have spread beyond the breast. The size of the breast cancer and how far it has spread greatly influence the outlook and course of treatment for the woman with the disease. Early detection tests such as mammograms save many thousands of lives annually. The American Cancer Society's guidelines for early detection of breast cancer improve the chances that breast cancer can be diagnosed at an early stage and treated successfully.

American Cancer Society Breast Cancer Screening Recommendations:

- Yearly mammograms are recommended starting at age 40 and continuing for as long as a woman is in good health.

- Clinical breast exam should be part of a periodic health exam, about every 3 years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women 40 and over.

- Women should know how their breasts normally feel and report any breast change promptly to their health care providers. Breast self-exam is an option for women starting in their 20s.

Mammograms are the cornerstone for prevention of breast cancer. A mammogram is simply an x-ray of the breast.

Screening mammograms are used to look for breast disease in women without problems. Mammograms and other screenings are recommended by the American Cancer Society on a specific schedule.

Only 2 to 4 out of 1,000 screening mammograms lead to a diagnosis of breast cancer. Mammograms can detect lumps as small as 3mm. If breast cancer is detected and treated early before it spreads to the lymph nodes and other parts of the body the chance of a cure is greater than 85 percent. If you are a woman age 40 or over you should have a mammogram every year unless otherwise specified by your medical provider. If assigned to DDEAMC contact your Primary Care Manager about scheduling your mammogram. The appointment phone number is (706) 787-7300.

Knowing your body, recognizing changes, and seeking medical attention when necessary is an important part in the disease prevention process. Women should be aware of how



their breasts normally look and feel. Women should know the warning signs of breast cancer and the guidelines for breast health.

The warning signs of breast cancer are: breast lump or thickening; bleeding or discharge from the nipple; change in breast shape or contour; dimpling or puckering of the skin; inflamed reddish appearance of the breast; or retraction or scaliness of the nipple. Women doing regular Breast Self Exams are more likely to detect changes early. BSE is a step-by-step process that women may use to regularly check her breasts for changes.

Breast Self Exams are: done while lying down; using the three middle fingers to feel lumps in the opposite side breast; using varying pressures (light, deeper, and firm); and using overlapping dime size circular motion.

Any breast lumps or other suspicious signs should be checked by a medical provider as soon as possible even though three-fourths of all breast lumps are benign.

Risk factors are defined as anything that increases your chances of getting diseases such as cancer. Different cancers have different risk factors. Tobacco use is a risk factor for cancers of the lung, mouth, larynx (voice box), bladder, kidney, and other organs. Exposure to strong sunlight is related to skin cancer. Some risk factors such as age and race cannot be changed (non-modifiable). While other risk factors associated with lifestyle choices can be changed (modifiable).

Non-modifiable risk factors such as your age and gender can't be changed but are good to be aware of so that you can target your healthcare and lifestyle decision accordingly. Simply being a woman puts you at risk for developing breast cancer. Men can develop breast cancer but women are 100 times more likely to be impacted. The risk of developing breast cancer increases with age. About 1 out of every 8 invasive breast cancers are found in women younger than 45 while 2 out of 3 are found in women over age 55.

About 5-10% of breast cancer cases are thought to be hereditary resulting directly from gene changes inherited. Still 70-80% of women that have breast cancer have no family history. It is important for a woman to take inventory of her non-modifiable risk factors for breast cancer so that she can make smarter healthcare and lifestyle decisions in the future.

There are certain lifestyles and medical decisions made by a woman that can increase her risk for getting breast cancer- these are called modifiable risk factors. These are risk factors that may be influenced by the actions and choices made by a woman. In just the last few years it was discovered that Hormone Replacement Therapy may increase the risk of developing breast cancer. The decision to use HRT should be made by the woman and her doctor after weighing the possible risks and benefits and considering her other risk factors for heart disease, breast cancer, and osteoporosis. Consumption of alcohol is clearly linked to increased risk of developing breast cancer. Excessive alcohol is also known to increase the risk of developing cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, and liver.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women limit their alcohol consumption to no more than one drink per day.

Being overweight or obese has been found to increase breast cancer risk, especially for women after menopause. Being overweight also impacts your cholesterol, self-esteem, blood pressure, and increases your risk for injuries because of the increased work load on your joints. Evidence is growing that physical activity in the form of exercise reduces breast cancer risk. Most experts recommend at least 30 minutes of brisk exercise most days of the week. The American Cancer Association recommends 45 to 60 minutes of intentional physical activity 5 or more days a week. Exercise also helps with mood regulation and manage-



(Left) Tamika Cook and Melanie Kumrow hang a pink ribbon on one of the trees in front of the South Entrance to the MCGHealth Medical Center.

Courtesy Photo

ment of weight, stress, cholesterol, and blood pressure. Consuming a high fat diet, using antiperspirants, having breast implants or an abortion, and choice of bras have not been found to increase the risk for developing breast cancer despite some media misrepresentation.

Women should be proactive and face the breast cancer threat head on! About one in eight women across the United States will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer this year. More and more women are surviving because of early detection, better education, and improved treatment. Meet the challenge of this disease head on by getting your screenings, knowing your body and your risk factors, and reducing your cancer risks whenever possible.

The DDEAMC and the Augusta community are planning many activities during the month of October in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. EAMC's Army Public Health Nursing Section will be sponsoring a Lunch and Learn activity featuring a Breast Cancer Survivor on Oct. 23 in Ike's Café (DDEAMC's dining facility) from noon to 1 p.m. DDEAMC Health & Wellness staff will be at the Main Post Exchange on Oct. 3 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. offering literature and other information.

Augusta's University Hospital is sponsoring their 8th Annual "Miracle Mile Walk" 8 a.m., Oct. 18 at the Augusta Commons.

For other questions or concerns about this or any other health promotion or community health issues call DDEAMC, Health and Wellness Center, (706) 787-6756

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Simulation training center features life-like scenarios

Charmain Z. Brackett
Correspondent

With her skill as a sonographer, Toyake Crawley quickly found several masses in the breast as she scanned over it.

"This is a beautiful machine," said Crawley, who was testing her skills at Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center's Medical Simulation Training Center.

Some of the masses were likely benign cysts; others looked more dangerous, she said.

Hospital officials held an open house last month for the simulation lab.

"All of this is new," said Col. Karla Hansen, the hospital's medical education director. "The whole idea was birthed about a year ago."

The simulation lab features a variety of computers and prosthetic body parts to simulate almost every type of medical situation from stitching wounds to delivering babies to performing a colonoscopy.

Although they aren't real patients, they are extremely life like. The skin coverings feel very similar to human skin, not hard plastic or rubbery.

The showcased piece in the lab is the sim man, a full-bodied mannequin which can react to any and every situation, according to Hansen.

Sim man's computer brain can cause him to experience any medical emergency such as cardiac arrest and shock. He is very lifelike; he has a pulse and breathes.

"He will talk and groan," she said. The lab is housed in two rooms on the hospital's seventh floor and is designed as a re-inforcer to the skills residents are learning and refining.

"An emergency situation can be performed in a safe environment," she said.

A certain scenario can be performed over and over again, and in the case of the sim man, complications can arise just as they might in a real situation.

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