

Stop It Before It's Too Late!

Recent Studies Show Increase In Breast Cancer Among Black Women

By Freda Springs
Public Relations Manager - Carolina Medicorp

Although the number of cases of breast cancer has not changed dramatically in the last 50 years, programs aimed at early detection have increased the number of cancers that are caught early. As a result, the number of deaths among women of all races who have participated in successful screening programs has been reduced 30 to 40 per-



Photo by Will & Doni McIntyre

cent. However, African-American women still have a higher risk of dying from breast cancer than any other cancer. One reason is that breast cancer in black women is often found when the disease has spread and is more difficult to treat.

According to the National Black Women's Health Project, minority women across the country are not receiving screening mammograms and their death rate from breast cancer is rising. In fact, half of all African-American women surveyed have never heard of mammography and only 30 percent over age 40 have had a mammogram. In contrast, 65 percent of all American women over 40 have had mammograms.

"The combination of self-examination, regular examination by physician and mammography can help reduce the number of deaths from breast cancer and increase the

number of cancers that are detected earlier," said Dr. Harold Pollard, a gynecologist at Forsyth Memorial Hospital.

It's important for you to be checked by your physician regularly - at least once a year and more often if anything suspicious is found.

When a woman turns 40, she should have a mammogram every one to two years and, when she turns 50, once a year. In addition, her physician should examine her breasts annually and she should examine her

"... Most women realize mammography is safe and effective."

- Dr. Harold Pollard

own breasts monthly.

"Depending on certain risk factors, your doctor may recommend you have a mammogram at an earlier age and, possibly, have mammograms more often," Pollard said. "Mammography might also be done at an earlier age if you or your doctor find something suspicious during an examination."

The first mammogram most women get is called baseline, and this is often compared with later mammograms. Later mammograms are called screening mammograms if you have no symptoms and diagnostic mammograms if you have symptoms.

Pollard acknowledges that certain barriers have kept some women from getting mammograms.

"In the past, there was some reluctance on the part of physicians to recommend screening mammograms," Pollard said. "They weren't sure that it really made a difference. They didn't realize its effective-

Tamoxifen Being Studied To Reduce Breast Cancer

By Freda Springs
Public Relations Manager - Carolina Medicorp

A national study of a drug that may help prevent breast cancer in high risk women is still going on at The Women's Center at Forsyth Memorial Hospital.

When the study of the drug Tamoxifen was launched in 1992, it became the first large-scale study of a drug to prevent cancer.

Researches have shown that taking Tamoxifen after surgery for breast cancer may prevent the development of new cancers in the opposite breast. This study seeks to determine if the same drug can reduce the risk of breast cancer in high-risk women.

Women, age 35 and older, who are at increased risk for developing breast cancer are eligible to participate.

More specifically, women 60 years of

age and older are automatically eligible to participate. Women 35 to 59 years of age must have a risk of breast cancer that is equal to or greater than the average risk of a 60-year old woman. Risk factors include the number of first-degree relatives (mother, sister, daughter) who have had breast cancer, whether the woman has had any children and her age at her first delivery, the number of breast lump biopsies a woman has had, and her age at her first menstrual period.

According to the National Cancer Institute, about 1.5 million women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer and almost half a million will die of the disease over the next ten years.

For more information about how you can participate in the Tamoxifen study, call Forsyth Memorial Hospital at 760-0122.

Having Your Picture Taken Can Save Your Life.

A mammogram is just that - a picture of the breast that can save your life.

As an African American woman, you have a higher risk of dying from breast cancer than any other cancer. A mammogram, or breast x-ray, can find breast cancer in its earliest, most treatable stages.

Call before Labor Day to receive The Gift Of Good Health.

At The Women's Center for Breast Care, a screening mammogram takes only a few minutes and it's just \$45.* And, if you call before Labor Day to schedule a mammogram for anytime during 1993, you'll receive The Gift of Good Health, a \$6 reduction in the low cost of a mammography screening.

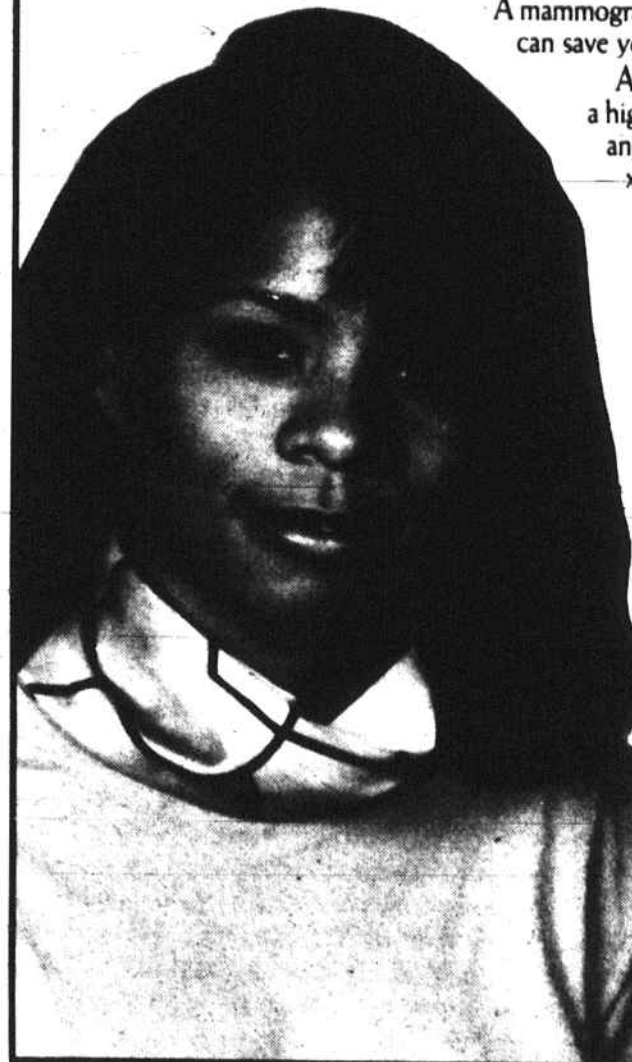
So make an appointment to "have your picture taken" today. Call 765-5303 or ask your doctor to set an appointment for you.

*If you have breast implants, please call for more information about the screening procedure and cost.

The
Women's Center
for Breast Care

1000 W. 10th St. Winston-Salem, NC 27103 • 765-5303

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ness. They were also concerned about the risk of radiation. For the most part, it appears that these concerns are behind us. Most women realize mammography is safe and effective."

Cost is another barrier, especially since women should have mammograms regularly, he said. Some breast screening facilities are now attempting to contain costs, and some insurance companies, whether voluntarily or in response to legislation, have started covering the cost of mammograms.

Women also don't get mammograms because they fear having the procedure, they fear any discomfort, and they fear the unknown.

"Patients worry that something might be found," Pollard said.

"But, I always say, balance that fear with the difference a mammogram can make and you'll probably make the rational decision to get a mammogram on a regular basis. Education is always the best way to handle fear."

Donations Needed Within the Black Community

By Roger Rollman
Bowman Gray School of Medicine

Carolina Lifecare, the organ procurement program at the Bowman Gray/Baptist Hospital Medical Center, has formed a committee of black health professionals to develop strategies that encourage African Americans to donate organs and tissues.

According to Sharon Haney, a Carolina Lifecare recovery coordinator, the entire nation faces a significant shortage of donated organs and tissues.

Ms. Haney explains that there are 31,000 Americans currently awaiting transplants and 7,000 of those people are African Americans. Nine hundred of those waiting for a transplant live in North Carolina.

There are 140 people in our region awaiting a kidney transplant and over half are African Americans. Blacks have a greater need for kidney transplants for a

number of reasons, including having a higher incidence of high blood pressure resulting in a greatly increased chance of kidney failure.

But even with the desperate need for organs to help black Americans, there is a reluctance among the nation's African Americans to donate organs.

Ms. Haney, who is a graduate of WSSU's school of nursing, said that public education about the need for organs is an important step in solving the national organ shortage. Ms. Haney also notes that all major religions support organ donation.

As a member of the black community, you have an opportunity to help other blacks lead healthier, more productive lives.

By learning the facts about organ and tissue donation, by discussing your wishes with your legal next of kin and by signing a uniform donor card and placing it with your driver's license, you can make a difference.