

Women's Community Cancer Project

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IN THIS ISSUE

- ✦ Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow Update
- ✦ Advocacy & Education
- ✦ A Good New Book: Anti Cancer
- ✦ The "Know Your Milk" Campaign
- ✦ Our New Email Updates
- ✦ Hope for The Future: A Comprehensive Look At Metastatic Breast Cancer

Why cancer's gaining on us

BY RITA ARDITTI

Published in the Op-Ed Section of the Boston Globe, October, 27th, 2008

FOR ALL THE PINK RIBBONS, BREAST-CANCER awareness events, fund-raisers, and celebrations of "survivorship," the facts remain grim. In this country, a woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer is one in eight. In 1975, the risk was about one in eleven.

Outside of skin cancer, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in women. It is estimated that in 2008 there will be 250,230 new cases of breast cancer among women. An estimated 41,000 women will die of metastatic breast cancer in 2008. Because we still do not know what the causes of breast cancer are, primary prevention remains an elusive goal while mammography and early detection are the focus of attention.

Since World War II, the proliferation of synthetic chemicals has gone hand-in-hand with the increased incidence of breast cancer. About 80,000 synthetic chemicals are used today in the United States, and their number increases by about 1,000 each year. Only about seven percent of them have been screened for their health effects. These chemicals can persist in the environment and accumulate in our bodies. According to a recent review by the Silent Spring Institute in Newton, 216 chemicals and radiation sources cause breast cancer in animals.

Nearly all of the chemicals cause mutations, and most cause tumors in multiple organs and animal species, findings that are generally believed to indicate they likely cause cancer in humans. Yet few have been closely studied by regulatory bodies. There is concern about benzene, which is in gasoline; polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are in air pollution from vehicle exhaust, tobacco smoke, and charred foods; ethylene oxide, which is widely used in medical settings;

and methylene chloride, a common solvent in paint strippers and glues.

There is also broad agreement that exposure over time to natural estrogens in the body increases the risk of breast cancer, so it is important to consider the role of synthetic estrogens in breast cancer development. Many other chemicals, especially endocrine-disrupting compounds—chemicals that affect hormones, such as the ubiquitous bisphenol A, which is found in plastic bottles and cans—are also thought to raise breast cancer risk. Endocrine-disrupting compounds are present in many pesticides, fuels, plastics, air pollution, detergents, industrial solvents, tobacco smoke, prescription drugs, food additives, metals, and personal-care products including sunscreens.

Is there definitive evidence that these substances cause breast cancer? Have they been sufficiently studied? Well, no. We need to know more about the timing, duration, and patterns of exposure, which may be as important as dosage. But shouldn't we do everything possible to reduce exposure to the suspected chemicals? Shouldn't we take precautionary measures, as we continue and deepen the research? In Massachusetts, the leading cause of death in 2006 was cancer. It is time for action.

In our state, the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, a coalition of more than 160 organizations, has worked for the passage of the Safer Alternatives Bill, which would create a program to replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives when feasible. The bill would establish a pragmatic, gradual approach to reducing health impacts from many of the toxic chemicals that we are exposed to in everyday life. The bill passed the Senate unanimously this year, but was

(continued on page 2)

not voted on by the House. The Alliance will introduce it again in the 2009 legislative session.

Yes, we need early detection but also primary prevention, and, of course, effective treatments for those of us with extended disease. Rachel Carson, who herself died of breast cancer in 1964, said it best: "For those in whom [cancer] is already a hidden or a visible presence, efforts to find cures must of course continue. But for those not yet touched by the disease and certainly for the generations as yet unborn, prevention is the imperative need."

Rita Arditti is one of the founders of the Cambridge-based Women's Community Cancer Project, a grassroots organization committed to cancer prevention. She has been living with metastatic breast cancer since 1979. ❧

Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow Update

BY MARGO GOLDEN

WCCP supports the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow (AHT) in promoting The Safer Alternatives Bill, An Act for a Competitive Economy Through Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals. This bill will create a pragmatic and flexible program in Massachusetts to replace toxic chemicals in the manufacturing process of consumer products with cost-effective, safer alternatives, wherever feasible. The 2007-2008 Massachusetts legislative session ended without passage of the bill. The bill passed the Senate unanimously on January 29th, 2008. Although eighty five Representatives signed a letter of support in spring 2008 the bill was never brought up for a vote in the House before the session ended.

Your help is needed to make sure your State Representative and Senator vote to pass this bill into law this session.

TAKE ACTION! Please call your state legislators today. GO TO www.healthytomorrow.org to learn more about the bill. Call and ask your legislators to co-sponsor the Safer Alternatives Bill.

Representatives: 617-722-2000 Senators: 617-722-1455
If your legislator did not co-sponsor the bill, ask him/her to support it:

"Please support The Safer Alternatives Bill (newly renamed An Act for a Competitive Economy Through Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals), sponsored by Representative Jay Kaufman and Senator Steven Tolman. This is a critically important bill to protect our health from toxic chemicals and keep Massachusetts businesses competitive

on the global economy so please make it a priority to see that it passes in the coming session."

If your legislator is a co-sponsor, thank him/her! E-mail AHT at info@healthytomorrow.org and let them know you are with WCCP and that you made your call.

Plus, at www.healthytomorrow.org please sign a petition and ask Governor Patrick to support the Department of Public Health to issue a regulation banning the sale of all children's products (for ages 3 and under) containing Bisphenol A (BPA). ❧

Advocacy and Education

In September 2008 we joined the Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Network (www.mbcnetwork.org) and worked on their national campaign to declare October 13 Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day. Through our efforts Boston's Mayor Menino, the MA Dept. of Public Health, and Cambridge's Mayor Simmons all issued proclamations on the plight of individuals living with stage 4 breast cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, over 250,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008, and an estimated 30% will develop metastatic breast cancer.

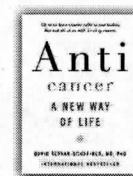
In the Spring and in the Fall of 2008 we did two presentations. One at the Women's Center in Cambridge, MA, and another at a brown bag lunch of the Stonewall Communities Lifelong Learning Institute at Wheelock College's Brookline campus. We showed a 17 minute DVD "Contaminated Without Consent" from the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow (AHT) and distributed information on safe cosmetics, rBGH in dairy, toxic substances, safe cleaning products, etc. They were both worthwhile doing and stimulated many questions and pointed comments.

WCCP remains an active member of the Legislative Committee of the Governing Board of the AHT and participates in many lobbying efforts, public events, and meetings, with the other members of the Alliance. ❧

A Good New Book About Cancer

BY RITA ARDITTI

An excellent book came out in the fall of 2008: *ANTICANCER: A New Way Of Life* by David Servan-Schreiber, MD,Ph.D, Viking Press, 2008. Hardcover, \$25.95. Servan-Schreiber, a physician and neuroscience researcher, co-founder of the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh



was diagnosed with brain cancer when he was 31 years old, received treatment and went into remission. Eventually though, he had a recurrence.

The book is both a memoir and a riveting journey through recent developments in the ideas about cancer prevention and treatment. The author does a good job of connecting the dots in widely dispersed areas of knowledge, all relevant to his focus in cancer and our natural defense mechanisms.

A review by Rita Arditti was published in the web page of Cambridge Naturals, a store in Cambridge, MA, www.cambridgenaturals.com. The review is also available in www.amazon.com, in the review section pertaining to the book. ☒

rBGH in MILK The Massachusetts “Know Your Milk Campaign”



AN OPEN LETTER FROM: Judy Norsigian (*Our Bodies Ourselves*); Deborah Shields (*Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition*); Rita Arditti and Margo Golden (*Women's Community Cancer Project*); Amy Agigian (*Center for Women's Health and Human Rights at Suffolk University*); and Ellie Goldberg (*Healthy Kids: The Key to Basics*).

April 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As health and food safety advocates, we are concerned about the use of rBGH (recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone) in dairy products in Massachusetts.

Inspired by the Physicians for Social Responsibility's successful “know your milk” campaign to stop the use of rBGH by major milk suppliers in Oregon, the goals of the Massachusetts’ “know your milk” campaign are to educate the public about the connection of rBGH to breast cancer and other cancers in humans, to urge producers to label dairy products, and to advocate that schools, hospitals, and other institutions eliminate rBGH from the dairy products they serve.

Background: In 1993, Monsanto, the chemical company, introduced rBGH, a genetically modified hormone that is injected into cows to increase milk production by 5-15%.

The Problems: rBGH causes elevated levels of a powerful insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1) in milk, thus increasing the risk of breast, prostate, colon, lung, and other cancers. rBGH also increases udder infections in cows so dairy products from rBGH-treated cows contribute to antibiotic resistance in humans.

According to a survey funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), 95 percent of Americans said milk from cows injected with rBGH should be labeled and 74 percent said they had concerns about the long-term health effects of milk produced using rBGH. However, millions of people in the United States are unknowingly consuming rBGH dairy products. After pressure from Monsanto the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ruled that dairy products from rBGH treated cows do not require a label. Increasingly, consumers around the country are saying “no” to rBGH products.

- As of January 1st 2008, Starbuck's milk is rBGH free.
- Kroger (a giant supermarket chain in the Midwest), Publix (a Florida supermarket chain), Wal-Mart and others do not use milk from rBGH-treated cows in their store brand products.
- Health Care Without Harm's Healthy Food in Hospitals project is working with hospitals around the country to eliminate rBGH dairy products from their facilities.

To join the Massachusetts “know your milk” campaign send an email to ellie.goldberg@gmail.com.

Thank you to Oregon's Physicians for Social Responsibility Campaign for the name “know your milk” and to Rick North, campaign director, for inspiration and support. ☒

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE: A Comprehensive Look at Metastatic Breast Cancer

Saturday - May 16, 2009

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Boston MA

For all conference information and to Register go to: www.mbcnetwork.org, and click on 2009 Conference.

Please download and print the flyer to post at your cancer center.

For conference concerns, contact:
danafarber.mbcnet@gmail.com

MBCN is a national independent advocacy group of and for people with metastatic breast cancer. All MBCN Programs are free of charge and open to patients, healthcare professionals, advocates, friends, and family. ☒

Some Websites That Might Be of Interest

www.healthytomorrow.org | Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow

www.ewg.org | Environmental Working Group

www.foodandwaterwatch.org | Food and Water Watch

www.organicconsumers.org | Organic Consumers Association

www.centerforfoodsafety.org | Center for Food Safety

www.safecosmetics.org | Campaign for Safe Cosmetics

<http://knowyourmilkma.blogspot.com>

www.bcaction.org | Breast Cancer Action

www.mbcc.org | Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition

www.silentspring.org | Silent Spring Institute

www.healthandenvironment.org | The Collaborative on
Health and the Environment

www.ourbodiesourselves.org | Our Bodies Ourselves

ABOUT WCCP: The Women's Community Cancer Project is a grassroots volunteer organization created to make changes in the current social, medical, and political approaches to cancer, particularly as they affect women. We are committed to the Precautionary Principle. WCCP is a non-profit tax exempt organization. The newsletter is free but tax-deductible gifts are always welcome.

Buy Local

More and more people are understanding the wisdom of buying food from local, known sources; thereby saving transportation fuel and obtaining food that is fresher and less compromised with various toxic herbicides and pesticides. Locally bought food supports the local community and strengthens us all. Please remember to buy LOCAL.

Our New Email

WCCP would like to occasionally send you an e-mail, just a few times a year, to let you know how you can be involved in advocacy work. You can participate with a phone call, e-mail, or lobby day visit to the State House. Or we may inform you of an interesting event. Join us.

Please send your e-mail address to:
wccporg@gmail.com

Editorial Committee: *Margo Golden and Rita Arditti.*
With many thanks to Rosario Morales, Linda Falstein,
Renee Shapiro, Jean Hardisty and Vera Spohr Cohen.

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