



Health Awareness

Breast Cancer Update: Knowledge about Breast Cancer Testing and Screening Can Save Lives

by Dr. Nicholas Robert, Fairfax-Northern Virginia Hematology (NAPSA)—This October,

Breast Cancer Awareness Month will inspire millions of women to participate in breast cancer walks and races, schedule mammograms or talk to their doctors about breast health. However, recent



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studies show that most women are only screened for breast cancer half as often as is recommended by physicians. Women over 40 should undergo breast cancer screening at least

once a year and consult their physician if a lump is discovered between mammograms. Women who are diagnosed with breast cancer should become familiar with the right questions to ask their physician. It is particularly important to ask about breast cancer testing procedures to better understand the specific types of breast cancer, as well as the treatment options that correspond to each.

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with breast cancer:

1) Speak up about your family's increased risk: Breast cancer can affect anyone. However, if you have been diagnosed with breast cancer, your family members may be at increased risk for developing the disease. Encourage family members to speak to their doctors early, as they may benefit from earlier or more frequent mammography or clinical breast exams. Doctors may also suggest adding other breast screening and

testing procedures such as a breast MRI or ultrasound to their screening regimen.

2) Talk to your doctor about available resources: Being diagnosed with breast cancer can be a confusing time for anyone. Having the right resources can help women understand their disease and seek out the best treatment options. Women should ask their doctor to recommend books, web sites and support groups that will help them understand their disease, meet other women who are dealing with breast cancer and talk about their concerns.

3) Understand your pathology report: Genetic research has shown that not all breast cancers are alike and different characteristics require different treatment approaches. Breast cancers can differ with regard to tumor size, nodal status, grade and hormone status. And, about 25 percent of women with breast cancer have a form of the disease called HER2-positive breast cancer, which has a greater risk of recurrence. If you are diagnosed with breast cancer, ask your physician about your pathology report and appropriate treatments for your specific type of breast cancer.

4) Learn about the latest treatment options: Cancer therapies have evolved tremendously over the past few years. New available treatment options include hormone therapies as well as therapies that target specific cancer genes, or targeted therapies. Women with HER2-positive breast cancer that has spread to other parts of their body (metastatic) may be candi-

dates for Herceptin® (Trastuzumab), a targeted therapy tailored against this specific type of disease. Herceptin works by targeting a tumor's growth mechanism associated with HER2-positive breast cancer.

5) Research clinical trials: Clinical trials are used to determine if investigational therapies are associated with increased disease control, to understand more about existing therapies and to learn more about diseases in general. Talk to your doctor to determine if there are clinical trials in your area that you might be eligible for. To learn more about current breast cancer clinical trials, visit www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials. If you are a woman being treated for HER2-positive breast cancer, you may be interested in participating in a special clinical trial that aims to learn more about this type of the disease. Information about the trial can be found at www.registher.com.

As with many drugs, Herceptin therapy has been associated with certain side effects. These effects occur rarely, but can include heart problems, severe allergic reactions, infusion reactions, and lung complications. Common side effects can include chills, fever, nausea, vomiting, headache, and pain. Patients should always consult their healthcare professional regarding the risks and benefits of therapy.

For a copy of the full prescribing information for Herceptin, including Boxed Warnings, please call 1-800-821-8590 or visit www.herceptin.com.