Breast Cancer Action:
Stop Breast Cancer Before It Starts!

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Breast Cancer

- A leading Women’s health issue
- Most common cancer after skin cancer
- Nearly 1 in 3 cancers diagnosed in women
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} leading cause of cancer deaths in women
Public Health Crisis

Each Year:

- Nearly a quarter million women diagnosed
- Approximately 40,000 women die
- Another 60,000 non-invasive (DCIS)
- Approx. 2.6 million women alive today have been treated for breast cancer
Short and Long Term Impacts

During Treatment
- Cost of treatment
- Lost earnings
- Side effects of treatment
- Depression & anxiety

After treatment
- Higher unemployment
- Lower earnings
- Secondary cancers
- Heart disease
- Physical disability
Lifelong Toll of Breast Cancer
Unequal Burden of Disease

- Highest incidence among white women
- 28% of Alaskan & Native American women’s cancers
- Black women are 40% more likely to die
- Latina women are 20% more likely to die
- WOC also experience greater financial decline
- Can’t explain these differences due to screening
Lifetime Risk of Breast Cancer Up

1964: 1 in 20

1984: 1 in 14

Today: 1 in 8
Rise of the Breast Cancer Movement

- **Breast Cancer Action** founded in 1990

- Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition founded 1991
  - **Silent Spring** emerged from MBCC Conference

- National Breast Cancer Coalition founded in 1991

- **Breast Cancer Fund** founded in 1992
Fueled by Other Social Movements

- **Feminist movement** of 60s and 70s
  - Challenging the passive & compliant female patient
  - Authenticating women’s knowledge

- **Women’s health movement** (like NWHN & OBOS)
  - Peer education
  - Address systemic exclusion from research & policy making

- **Civil rights movement**
  - Unequal burden of disease

- **HIV / AIDS Activism** (like ActUP)
  - Direct action
Politicized Breast Cancer

- Not only personal tragedy but public health crisis
- Refuse to blame women for their own breast cancers
- Demand focus on the root causes of disease
- Reveal conflict of interest and the cancer industry
- Create patient-centered research paradigm
- Demand attention for heavily impacted communities
Successes of the BC Movement

- **Build coalitions across movements**
  - Connect the dots between issues

- **Democratize the science**
  - Research responsive to women’s concerns
  - Including patients & advocates in all aspects of scientific review
  - CBCRP and Silent Spring

- **Counter-narrative to mainstream pink ribbon culture**
  - “Tyranny of cheerfulness”
  - Cult of survivor
  - Awareness became the ends—not only the means
Are you aware?
Main messages re: breast cancer

- Eat healthy.
- Get a mammogram
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise.
- Breastfeed!
Known Risk Factors: just 30-50%

- Family history—accounts for less than 10%
- Early menarche/late menopause
- Late first child birth/no children
- Hormone replacement therapy
- Alcohol consumption
- Weight gain after menopause
- Being tall
- Higher birth weight as a baby
- AGE
50-70% Have No Known Risk Factor
Science on Environmental Links
“The Panel was particularly concerned to find that the true burden of environmentally induced cancer has been grossly underestimated.”

- 2008-09 Annual Report
Demand Systemic Change

- No more whack a mole
  - Need comprehensive chemical reform
- Complex disease with complex causes
  - Exposures over lifetime to many chemicals
- Refuse to be our own EPA / FDA
- Protect all of us, including the most vulnerable
- Stop blaming women for their cancers
The Precautionary Principle

Act to prevent harm before it occurs

Stop Cancer Before it Starts!
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