

# Breast Cancer Talking Points – May 2008

**Source:** Susan G; Komen for the Cure® (unless otherwise noted)

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**BY THE NUMBERS**

- There are 2.5 million breast cancer survivors in the U.S. today.
- Globally, more than 1.1 million women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and more than 410,000 will die from the disease (projection for the year 2007).
- Globally, a case of breast cancer is diagnosed every 29 seconds. A woman dies from breast cancer every 75 seconds world wide.
- In the United States, a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every 3 minutes. One dies every 13 minutes.
- 1 in 8 women in the U. S. will develop breast cancer in her lifetime.
- Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women.
- Breast cancer is the second highest leading cause of cancer death among women (after lung cancer) and the leading cause of cancer death among young women.
- Being a woman and getting older are the most common and most important risk factors for breast cancer.
- Thanks to improvements in early detection and treatment, breast cancer deaths among all women have steadily declined since 1991.
- Currently, there is neither a cure for this disease nor any known way to prevent it, making early detection key to survival. Early detection can be an extremely effective tool: if breast cancer is found and diagnosed while still confined to the breast, the 5-year relative survival rate is more than 98 percent.
- What's more, timely screening mammograms could prevent 15 to 30 percent of all deaths from breast cancer in women over age 40.

**DISPARITIES**

- Although breast cancer continues to affect people from all backgrounds, there are significant differences within the mortality rates among racial groups.
- The grim news, however, is that low-income women have lower screening rates, are 41 percent more likely to be diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer, and are three times more likely to die from breast cancer, according to studies from the Institute of Medicine.
- Similarly, uninsured women are more likely to receive a late-stage breast cancer diagnosis and are 30 to 50 percent more likely to die from the disease than women with insurance.

## BC Talking Points - continued

- While white women have the highest breast cancer incidence rate (140.8 cases per 100,000 women) in this country, Black women have the highest mortality rate nationally (35.9 deaths per 100,000 women).
- From 2000-2003 African American women had a 36 percent higher death rate than other women, giving them the highest death rate and poorest survival rate of any racial or ethnic group for breast cancer.
- Although breast cancer mortality rates declined 2.6% annually between 1992 and 2000, the decline was twice as great for white women as for black women.
- However, African American women still have a higher breast cancer death rate (than Caucasian women) even though African American women develop breast cancer less often.
- While 90 percent of white women diagnosed with breast cancer survive for at least five years, only 77 percent of black women survive for that long.
- There is also evidence that tumors are more aggressive among black women than they are in white women.
- If you are an African American woman, you are less likely to develop breast cancer, but more likely to die from the disease than women in other groups. African American women have a 35 percent higher death rate than Caucasian women, even though they are less likely to get breast cancer.
- If you are a Hispanic or Latina woman you are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer at a more advanced – and deadlier – stage. Only 38 percent of Hispanic women age 40 and older have regular mammograms.
- If you are an Arab immigrant beliefs and customs may discourage you from being screened. There may also be other practical barriers, such as language or transportation.
- If you are an Asian immigrant, language barriers may make it difficult for you to get screened and treated.
- If you are a Native American or Alaska native, you are less likely than women of any other ethnic group in the U.S. to be alive five years or longer after a breast cancer diagnosis. Only 37 percent of Native American women age 40 and older get mammograms.
- If you live in a rural community, you may have to travel long distances to find a screening facility or a clinic for treatment.
- If you are a lesbian or bisexual woman, negative experiences with the healthcare system may discourage you from seeking routine medical care, reducing your chances of finding breast cancer in its early, more treatable stages.
- If you are under age 40 and are at high risk for breast cancer, you are less likely to benefit from screening technology compared to older women because your breast tissue may be denser, making mammography less effective.

## BC Talking Points - continued

- If you are over age 70, you are less likely to receive the best available treatment.
- If you are a man, you are less likely to think it's breast cancer if you find a lump in your breast and you may be diagnosed late.
- If you are disabled, you are less likely to be offered breast-conserving surgery instead of a mastectomy. You may also have mammograms less often than you should because screening facilities may not be able to accommodate your disability.

## MICHIGAN

- American Cancer Society 2007 estimates: 5,900 Michigan women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 1,320 women in the state will die from the disease.
- Thirteen percent or 410,808 non-elderly Michigan women are uninsured and do not have access to preventative health care services.<sup>1</sup>
- African American women in Michigan are dying of breast cancer at a higher rate (34 per 100,000) than White women (23 per 100,000).<sup>2</sup>
- Wayne County was identified in a Susan G. Komen for the Cure-commissioned report as one of eight U.S. communities with alarmingly high breast cancer mortality rates. In fact, because of gaps in access to quality care, African American women in Detroit die from the disease far more often than White women.
- The Michigan Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (MI BCCCP) pays for life-saving cancer screening services and follow-up care for including cancer treatment if that should be needed to under- and uninsured Michigan women. If current funding is maintained, it is estimated the program will still be able to reach only 20 percent of women who qualify.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/usernote/schedule.html> accessed through [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org).

<sup>2</sup> National Cancer Institute, State Cancer Profiles, Death Rate Report by State, 2004. Available at <http://statecancerprofiles.cancer.gov/cgi-bin/deathrates/deathrates.pl?00&055&00&2&001&1&1&1>.