

The Paraben Debate

Hosted by The Organic Pharmacy, London, 8th October 2008

Clare Dimmer – No More Breast Cancer

A charity looking at how we can change things, how we can prevent breast cancer being diagnosed in the first place.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month (BCAM)

First introduced into the UK by the Estee Lauder group in 1993

Has become synonymous with Pink and the Ribbon emblem

A premise of BCAM is that with enough money for research, *a cure will be found*

Statistics show that pre-BCAM and post-BCAM incidence of breast cancer in the UK has continued to rise. The average age of women diagnosed with breast cancer since 1993 is 50-54.

Breast cancer has increased by 18.5% since 1993 – over 1% year on year.

A ‘cancer forever’ future by 2025

In 2004 fifty top Oncologists gathered to discuss the future of cancer in the UK – their conclusion:

By 2025 ‘cancer will become one of the major chronic diseases that impact on the way people live but do not inexorably lead to death’ – such as asthma/diabetes (still very unpleasant diseases to live with and not to be recommended if you value your quality of life.)

‘The fear that cancer kills, still prevalent in the early years of 21st century, will be replaced by an acceptance that many forms of cancer are simply a consequence of old age.’

With this thought in mind...

We are sold myths of normality and inevitability of cancer.

To enable us to embrace a ‘cancer forever’ future with equanimity another tenet of BCAM is about not being afraid.

Breast cancer is being promoted as little more than a challenging rite of passage to be enthusiastically embraced by ‘real’ women.

Breast Cancer can be good for you!?

An article in Daily Mail 27/09/2008 stated – ‘Breast cancer is not cruel – you just have to knuckle down and get on with it.’

But many women feel that such comments only serve to belittle what is a life-threatening and traumatic disease.

‘I feel the heading was offensive, any woman struggling with their diagnosis, I am sure, will feel the same. CANCER IS CRUEL TO EVERYONE IT AFFECTS.

Women are fed up with being blamed for something that they have little or no control over.

However, perhaps there is more control that we can take than we realise...

1990 study discovers raised levels of Oestrogen

Blood-serum concentrations of hormones linked to breast cancer were compared between women in rural China and in Britain. Oestradiol levels higher in British women by:

36% - aged 35-44

90% - aged 45-54

171% - aged 55-64

Beijing blames pollutants for rise in killer cancers (Guardian.co.uk – 22/05/2007)

“Raising fears that breakneck economic growth is having a dire impact on the nation’s health, government survey blamed pollution for sharp rise in cancer cases.”

Whereas the Chinese Govt. seems to have learnt from the fact that environmental pollutants mimic oestrogen and high levels of oestrogen are implicated in higher breast cancer risk – the same cannot be said for the UK Govt...

Government’s Cancer Reform Strategy, 2007

‘The No More Breast Cancer campaign argues that we need to face up to the effects of environmental pollution in relation to breast cancer. Policy-makers need to acknowledge that lifelong, low-level exposure to a toxic cocktail of carcinogens and hormone disruptors in the home, workplace and environment are increasingly being linked with this disease.’

(Extract from BCUK submission for Cancer Reform Strategy, 2007)

‘There is little convincing evidence to indicate that environmental exposure to chemicals in the UK causes cancer.’

(Response from DoH, January 2008)

But there appears to be a large fly in the ointment of the 'cancer forever' future as envisaged by the Government and its top oncologists...

Cancer drugs costing £50billion will crush the NHS, says expert

Professor Karol Sikora says the next generation of drugs would keep patients alive longer, but could swallow half of the current NHS cancer budget **within four years.**

'The calculations I've done show a pretty bleak picture unless we have *drastic change.*'

(Daily Mail, 09/09/2008)

It is therefore evident that we need to make these drastic changes asap – as Einstein himself said... **'We can't solve problems using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.'**

So, the change we recommend is to include primary prevention in our arsenal against breast cancer – not only research, screening, and treatment, but prevention too.

We believe that breast cancer is preventable

Diana Ward, Chair of Breast Cancer UK (2004-2007) **"We want to change women's view of breast cancer, from one that believes it to be inevitable, to one that sees it as preventable"**

BCUK argues that it is imperative we learn to deal with breast cancer differently, but why should we have to go through such a diagnosis in the first place? This is the 21st century after all. Breast cancer can be prevented and women should be told how.

We challenge Government to acknowledge breast cancer as a major public health risk by:

- Accepting that **'lifestyle' changes alone cannot prevent women getting breast cancer** whilst cancer-causing agents and EDCs are in the environment and our everyday products.
- **Including environmental pollutants as a recognised risk factor** impacting on breast cancer incidence levels.
- Widening the debate on breast cancer from personal lifestyle factors, screening and treatment – **to include prevention.**

Especially since a recent drop in breast cancer incidence in the US occurred due to women's actions...

Breast cancer reduction in US linked to women abandoning HRT – 2007

HRT use (in US) declined rapidly in 2002, following highly-publicised reports from Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study showing an increased risk of breast cancer, heart disease, stroke, blood clots and urinary incontinence amongst postmenopausal women who were using combined HRT.

This reduction of 7.2% in breast cancer incidence in the US was a direct result of women themselves taking note of the conclusions of the HRT study and making their own decisions to abandon the combined-HRT

therapy as being too dangerous to their health to continue - and the major improvement only took a year to show up!

What you can do...

As consumers – buy organic food, toxin-free toiletries and cosmetics, greener baby-care products; avoid plastics and pesticides; and opt for more natural products and furnishings at home.

As citizens – lobby supermarkets, retailers, politicians, and industry, urging them to acknowledge and to act upon the scientific information that is already available on the links between environmental pollution and toxic chemicals in our everyday products and breast cancer.

Changes already achieved by consumer action

Anti-Apartheid Movement – ‘we are not asking the British people for anything special. We are just asking you to withdraw your support from apartheid by not buying South African goods’ – Julius Nyerere South African founder member

And more recently...

Freedom food – ‘Battery-farm backlash boosts free-range eggs’ – Independent, 09/08/2006

Mayonnaise manufacturer Hellman’s has made the decision to use only free range eggs in its product starting as early as June 2008.

And all these changes have been brought about by consumer pressure. By simply choosing to buy the ethical and healthier product.

You have the Power!

Remember that there is Power in your Purse. Especially when you –

- Shop with discernment – be ‘future-friendly’
- Withdraw your support from toxic 20th century products and industries
- Lobby the retailers, the manufacturers, your MP and Government – ask them why carcinogens & EDC’s are in our products and environment?

Register your support for the No More Breast Cancer campaign

<http://www.breastcanceruk.org/register.html>