



Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Program

Annual Extended Environmental Exposures Conference – November 2014, San Francisco

By Dawn Anderson, Executive Director

The Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Program's (BCERP) annual gathering of scientists and community partners took place in San Francisco, November 19-21. As community partners for BCERP research being conducted at UW-Madison, WBCC Executive Director, Dawn Anderson and Board Member, Kris Miller attended the conference with other community partners, Mary Pat Berry, Sarah Mroz, Dr. Beth Neary and our lead investigator at UW, Michael Gould, PhD.



L-R: Dr. Beth Neary, Kris Miller, Mary Pat Berry, Dawn Anderson, Dr. Michael Gould, Sarah Mroz

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BCERP is co-funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI). The research began in 2003 and is now taking place at ten sites across the country. These sites, using both epidemiological and biological studies, are looking at breast cancer risk across the lifespan. Specifically, research is focusing on "Windows of Susceptibility" during a woman's lifespan, beginning in utero, during which exposures to certain environmental stressors may cause biological changes that increase risk for breast cancer later in life.

It is important to point out that in this context, "environment" is considered any non-inherited factor, including lifestyle and behavioral factors (such as body weight, physical activity and dietary factors), reproductive factors, chemical agents and social factors (such as local government control over chemical use, access to fresh food and health care).

Early puberty has long been established as a risk factor for breast cancer and has been of particular interest to the researchers. We know that puberty is

occurring at younger ages than just a few decades ago and there is great interest in why that is so. The initial three sites have been conducting what are known as the Puberty Studies of BCERP. Dr. Susan Teitelbaum of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine (one of the puberty study sites) presented information indicating that environment is related to girls' development and emphasized the importance of this "enormous wealth of information" in understanding the role environment plays in girls' development. Over 1200 girls, between the ages of 6-8, have been followed for over ten years during a critical time in their lives. During that time, over 100 biomarkers in blood and urine were measured. Information regarding demographics and ancestry were separated out from information about environmental exposures so that researchers could attempt to make associations between exposures and the timing of when girls began puberty.

Dr. Larry Kushi (Kaiser Permanente) discussed outcomes from research looking at the role of phytoestrogens in pubertal onset. Phytoestrogens are estrogenic compounds found in plants – the

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President's Letter

Dear Members;

This is my first letter to you as your "returning" Board President. It is exciting for me to assume the Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition (WBCC) Board leadership again! I "semi-retired" from my day job this past September and now have more time to devote to WBCC.

I am excited to introduce our Board of Directors to you. They were newly elected in November. Returning Board members include: Vice President – Marsha Connet, Secretary – Karen Hunt, and Directors – Colleen Booth and Kris Miller. We also welcome new Board members, Treasurer – Ann Martel, and Directors – Margaret McLeod – Brahm, Eric Ford, and Carrie Riccobono. Please feel free to contact any Board member with your ideas, questions and concerns.

Departing from our Board is Andy Gutierrez. Andy served as our Treasurer for 7 years, and we thank him for his expertise, his sense of humor, and his dedication.

WBCC will have a full agenda for 2015. Our various Committees have been meeting and planning and are anticipating your participation. Of particular note are the State and National legislative priorities. Statewise, we will continue to closely monitor the Wisconsin Well Woman Program to assure all eligible women have access to this valuable program. We also will be monitoring the status of the Medicaid Expansion in Wisconsin, obesity prevention strategies, and the return of any legislation that would restrict local control over air and water quality issues. We will be having our State Advocacy Day on Wednesday, March 4, 2015, in Madison. Please plan to join us. You can now register for State Advocacy Day on the WBCC website.

On the National level, we will be supporting the Department of Defense funding of the Breast Cancer Research Program, and the re-introduction of the Accelerating the End of Breast Cancer legislation. Please see the many articles in this issue for more information on all of WBCC's activities.

Finally, we remember WBCC Advocate, Barb Bristow. I remember teaming up with Barb the first time she attended our State Advocacy Day. Even though Barb was a bit anxious about this being her first lobbying effort, I was impressed by her knowledge of the issues, her compassion, and her ease when she was speaking to all the legislators we met with. To me, she was a "natural advocate." We will miss her positive and determined spirit.

Take good care,

Rhonda Deneka



Retiring Board Director
Andy Gutierrez

RARE CHAIR AFFAIR 2014

The Auction You Never Forget!

The bidding started with a bang this year! Following the heartwarming remarks of our special guest, author Gerylun Lucas (*“Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy”* and *“Then Came Life”*), Pam Radaj’s tattoo chair was brought out for the first round of bidding. Pam, a tattoo artist, painted breast cancer tattoos all over her beautiful chair entitled *“Under My Skin”*. Gerylun, who had just mentioned to us that she has a few meaningful tattoos herself, shot her hand up immediately on the first bid. And again. And again. While trying to manage a few bites of her dinner, she kept up her counter bidding – eventually winning the chair for \$900! The chair then began a long journey to Gerylun’s favorite New York City tattoo parlor!

Not long after *“Under My Skin”* got the crowd revved up, survivor artist Karen Dubis’ tribute chair to Marvin Hamlich went for \$2222.22 as her friends and family drove the bidding up to the exciting conclusion (two is apparently her favorite number!). The two special artist chairs donated by Phil Cloninger and Kyle Zubatsky, in honor of all the women they’ve worked with over the years, brought in nearly \$1000 together. Rare Chair Affair committee members noted time and again that this year’s chairs were all among the most beautiful they’ve ever seen. From whimsical to spiritual, they covered a wide range of emotions and memories held by the survivor artists. And as they do every year, they raised vital funds to help support the WBCC over the next year. We extend our gratitude to the survivor artists for sharing their time, stories and talent with us, a tireless event committee and volunteers, our donors and sponsors for another wonderful Rare Chair Affair – it truly is an auction you never forget! Check out www.rarechairaffair.org for many more photos from this year’s event.



2014 Survivor Artists

- Row 1: Phyllis Holder, Pat Skowronski, Pam Radaj
- Row 2: Melissa Hodik, Melissa Tabler, Marge Vetter
- Row 3: Laura Stratte, Kristal Clegg, Karen Dubis
- Row 4: Jo DeMars, Jianne Wade, Dana Stewart
- Row 5: Clarice Zucker, Camellia Givens, Holly Schulz

2015 Annual State Advocacy Day: You should be there!

Get Informed, Excited and Empowered!

When: Wednesday, March 4 | 8:30am-4:30pm

Where: State Capitol Building Rm. 425 SW

Here's your opportunity to speak with legislators about policy issues important to the breast cancer community!

Our morning is spent as a group reviewing our policy priorities, honing our arguments, and learning best practices for productive meetings with legislative offices. Participants will be divided into small teams, each led by an experienced advocate, and will spend the afternoon in meetings with targeted offices.

Morning refreshments and a box lunch are provided. There is no charge to participate, however registration is required so that we can send you materials to review before Advocacy Day.

If you've never spent a day lobbying for something you care about, we invite you to join us and feel the empowerment and sense of accomplishment you will have at the end of the day! You can help make changes that affect thousands of Wisconsin women just by spending this day with us and adding your voice to our Collective Voice!

Register NOW on our website – www.standupandspeakout.org

New Law in Effect January 2015:

Cancer Treatment Fairness Act expands access to effective cancer therapies

As of January 1, 2015, many Wisconsin cancer patients now benefit from the state's new Cancer Treatment Fairness Act. Intravenous (IV)/infused anticancer medications are typically covered under a health plan's medical benefit, with patients responsible for a nominal copayment, per treatment. Orally-administered anticancer medications, however, are usually covered under a health plan's pharmacy benefit. Under the pharmacy benefit, oral anticancer medications are often included in the highest tier of a health plan's drug benefit & come with the highest out-of-pocket cost, requiring patients to pay a coinsurance – or a percentage of the overall total cost of the drug. This percentage coinsurance can often equal thousands of dollars each month; a price tag that restricts access to life-saving oral anticancer therapies for untold numbers of cancer patients.

As of January 1, 2015, this will change for cancer patients in Wisconsin, when The Cancer Treatment Fairness Act (SB 300) goes into effect, giving them greater access to the latest and most effective anticancer treatments. The bill, which passed at the end

of the 2014 legislative session after a hard fought battle by the American Cancer Society – Cancer Action Network, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, the Medical College of Wisconsin and dozens of other coalition partners, including WBCC, requires health insurance companies to charge patients no more than \$100 out-of-pocket for a 30-day supply of orally administered anticancer medications. The bill was sponsored by retiring State Representative Pat Strachota (R-West Bend) and State Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) and overwhelmingly passed both houses of the state legislature. The Cancer Treatment Fairness Act was signed into law by Governor Scott Walker in April.

The law does not require health plans to cover a new service and only impacts those that currently list chemotherapy as a covered benefit. The state law impacts residents covered by a private commercial health plan. The law does not impact the federal Medicare program. Wisconsin joins 33 other states and the District of Columbia, joining states like Missouri, Kentucky and Ohio, in enacting similar legislation.

Thank you Senator Alberta Darling and Representative Sandy Pasch!



WBCC Board Director Mar Brahm was pleased to present Senator Alberta Darling with a WBCC Legislative Award for her work on the 2014 Cancer Treatment Fairness Act, which provides parity to cancer patients who take oral chemotherapy drugs. (See an article on Oral Parity above)



Executive Director Dawn Anderson presented an Appreciation Award to retiring State Representative Sandy Pasch for her long support of issues important to the WBCC and commitment to women's health.

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most recognizable of which are soy products like tofu or edamame. In his studies, girls who consumed higher quantities of phytoestrogen had a somewhat delayed onset of breast development in comparison to girls who consumed less. Interestingly, no association was found between phytoestrogen intake and the onset of pubic hair, another hallmark of pubertal onset. This suggests that different biological pathways are involved.

Research was also done at the genetic level – exploring associations between when puberty began and variations in biological pathways that play a role in pubertal timing. Dr. Chi-Chen Hong (Roswell Park Cancer Institute) examined several pathways, focusing on metabolic pathways since obesity appears to be associated with early puberty. She reported that for both breast and pubic hair development, obesity, growth and development, and lipid metabolism had the highest number of associations with early puberty. In African American girls, neural pathways were also significant. Dr. Susan Pinney also uncovered a potential association between the degree and timing of DNA methylation with some changes related to puberty.

All of this work around puberty is helping researchers understand the relationship between environment and when a girl enters puberty. If we understand it at the molecular level we can begin to connect the dots and recommend risk reduction strategies that not only may prevent genetic damage at this critical time in a girl's life, but may also push the puberty window back out to an older age.

While puberty is considered one important “Window of Susceptibility” to environmental damage, there are others. Researchers in the “WOS” arm of the program are conducting biological studies, often using animal models, to evaluate the effects of suspected environmental stressors at different windows in a woman's lifespan. A second portion of the summit was given over to these researchers to share their work.

Previous animal studies have shown that a high fat diet prior to puberty can increase breast cancer risk, and that even if a low fat diet is adopted in adulthood, the “damage” cannot be undone. Dr. Shuk-Mei Ho (University of Cincinnati) has been looking at the interactive effects of a high fat diet and exposure to the chemical BPA on pregnant rats, specifically the effects on the offspring. Her outcomes showed that exposure to a high fat diet and BPA, even at low doses, resulted in higher cancer risk in offspring compared to exposure to a high fat diet alone. The increase in risk persisted for three generations. Likewise, Dr. Sandra Haslam (Michigan State University) presented results from a mouse study that showed a diet high in animal fat during puberty led to the development of tumors similar to human triple negative breast cancer. Dr. Haslam pointed out a human study published in 2014 (*Farvid, MS et al BMJ:2014; 348 : g3437*) that parallels these animal results. In the Farvid study, in 2830 cases of breast cancer over a 20 year period, they found that a higher intake of total red meat was associated with increased risk overall. They concluded that higher intake of animal fat during early adulthood may be considered a risk factor for breast cancer.

Dr. Melissa Troester (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill) discussed research looking at specific features of breast tissue in association with exposures such as obesity, pregnancy and exposures to other estrogens. It is well established that “dense” breast tissue is a risk factor for breast cancer in and of itself – not just because it make tumors harder to find on a mammogram. And we have also long known that giving birth conveys a “protective” effect against

breast cancer, and that women who have no children or have them later in life are at a higher risk for breast cancer. Dr. Troester, though, identified the period after giving birth as a window of greater risk due to pregnancy being a period of high epithelial density. This epithelial density gradually decreases for a number of years after giving birth before the protective effect of parity begins. Epithelial density seems to track with mammographic density – in other words, it is concentrated in areas of high mammographic density.

Dr. Michael Gould (the UW – Madison researcher with whom we work) has, in his past work, identified three genetic loci that appear to act during the young adult window of susceptibility. All three loci control gene expression that could result in susceptibility or resistance to breast cancer. Dr. Gould's lab is initiating research to identify how those loci respond to certain environmental exposures during this window and will be attempting in one study to mimic resistance effects using an external compound. Wisconsin BCERP partners suggested several environmental “toxins” that should be investigated and we will be working with Dr. Gould on another arm of this research in which his hypotheses will be tested in a human study.

Opening the summit in her keynote address, Sarah Gehlert, PhD emphasized the complexity of breast cancer – the determinants of which occur at “many levels of influence, from the cellular to the societal, which interact with one another in complex ways across the life cycle.” For instance, chemical and social environmental exposures are connected because social impacts (like low socioeconomic status) are tied to exposure to chemicals. Likewise, there are social determinants of obesity (a breast cancer risk factor), such as health literacy and features of a person's built environment (safe places for physical activity, multiple fast food outlets and few options for fresh vegetables/fruits). She identified six levels of influence to breast cancer risk and outcomes (Warneck, Oh, Gehlert et al AJP 2008):

- 1. Social conditions and policies**
- 2. Institutions**
- 3. Neighborhoods**
- 4. Social relationships**
- 5. Individual risk**
- 6. Biologic/Genetic pathways**

All of the above are pathways impacting breast cancer risk and outcome, which, from my perspective, means there is a role for nearly everyone to play in reducing breast cancer risk. You don't need to be a researcher if you can have an impact on the social conditions and policies that increase risk. You can manage your own personal risk with some knowledge, but you can also share risk reduction strategies with others. Very little can be accomplished working in silos. As more information becomes available from BCERP research, it will be important that collaborations be forged to address risk factors, “from the cellular to the societal.”

The Wisconsin BCERP Community Partners are excited to be participating in what we consider to be a much needed approach to breast cancer control – to look upstream as far as we can with the specific purpose of identifying targets that can be influenced in ways that reduce risk. Watch for more exciting news from your WI-BCERP Partners in the coming year as a new round of NCI/NIEHS funding gets underway.

Sharing Information on How to Reduce Your Daughter's Risk of Breast Cancer

Thanks to a grant from the Cedarburg Junior Women's Club, WBCC was pleased to organize and share two presentations in November on how caregivers of young girls can begin now to reduce their daughters' risk of breast cancer later in life. The "Reducing Her Risk Now" presentations were led by WBCC Executive Director Dawn Anderson, a Community Partner for research being conducted as part of the national Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Program (BCERP), and volunteers Laura Stratte, Moria Leonhardt, and Kelly Herda. All three volunteer presenters have young daughters, making them passionate about the topic. Laura and Moria are also both young survivors of breast cancer and Kelly has a strong family history of the disease.

Dawn gave participants background on BCERP, explaining why the years before a girl enters puberty are such an important "window of susceptibility" to genetic damage from environmental agents.

The presentations included information on environmental agents of concern, followed by specific actions that caregivers could begin to take at home. Multiple handouts and other resources were shared with participants.

We will shortly be conducting a survey of all the participants to measure the impact these presentations had on their day to day choices related to diet, exercise, and personal care products. If you are in the Milwaukee area and would be interested in hosting a presentation, please contact us at 414-963-2103 or wbcc@standupandspeakout.org. We will continue to present this information in formal and informal settings and hope to secure additional funding to visit other parts of the state with it in 2015. In the meantime, please see the "12 Ways" insert in this issue of Collective Voice and on the Education page of our website to see some of the suggestions offered at the presentations.

Missing Our Friend...

WBCC lost a strong advocate and friend in 2014. The passing of Barb Bristow in June shook Policy Committee members who had come to love and respect her. Barb came to the WBCC after her diagnosis – she was doing well and she was anxious to begin educating legislators about breast cancer and advocating for what is needed to end the disease. Barb was a WBCC Sherry Kohlenberg Scholarship awardee in 2013 and joined us in Washington DC for the National Breast Cancer Coalition's Annual Summit and Lobby Day. Despite suffering a recurrence, Barb still showed up for State Advocacy Day in March of 2014. It was sadly the last time her footsteps would pound those marble floors from office to office, delivering her passionate, first-hand knowledge about the importance of the Cancer Fairness Treatment Act.

While we are sad, it cannot possibly compare to the loss her family and friends feel. Barb will be missed by her father and stepmother, Gib and Kay Chick; her husband, John; her oldest son, Michael and his wife, Emma, as well as her youngest son, Daniel, who has taken up her mantle as a WBCC advocate. Her friend Kelly Thompson joined Barb on her Wisconsin Advocacy Day excursions to Madison from the LaCrosse area.

Barb's family generously directed memorial donations to WBCC. We thank her family for sharing her with us in her last few years, and for believing in the mission of WBCC. Memorials were shared by the following donors and we thank them too:

Jeffrey Winter
Diane Dierksen
Theresa Daley-Mack
Ellen Jude
Ervin Dwyer
Lois Norberg

Dianne Sackmann
Sally Zein
Julliann Anderson
Renee Leidel
Judith Wylie
Joan Calloway

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Julia Rodgers
Sarah Winn
Kathleen Iverson
Jamie Dewitt



Barbara Bristow
BREAST CANCER ADVOCATE



With her Congressman, Ron Kind, in Washington DC at the NBCC Lobby Day in 2013



With her State Sen. Jennifer Schilling, and friend Kelly Thompson at State Advocacy Day 2013



With her son, Dan, Kelly Thompson and Jennifer Schilling, at State Advocacy Day 2014

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year such a success!

Rare Chair Affair Sponsors and Donors:

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 Harley Davidson
 Partnership Bank of Ozaukee County for providing
 photography by Jeanne Mueller
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 Sara Strunk
 Two Men and A Truck
 The Wisconsin Club
 Diane Yagen in honor of Linda Settler

Rare Chair Affair Committee:

Jo DeMars
 Carol Peterson
 Debra Rand-Feldman
 Lauren Roberts
 Patricia Skowronski
 Jayme Wittke

The WBCC applauds the following community groups and businesses that held fundraising events, or donated proceeds to us in the second half of 2014! Thank you one and all!

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 Debbie Hausch's Poker Run
 Fiesta Cancun Mexican
 Restaurant
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 Wilderness Resort
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Thanking Weather Tight President, Tod Colbert and Vice President, Todd Schulz.

Thank you also to Weather Tight for this discount for our supporters and a 5% donation when you use this coupon and mention the WBCC give back program!

The National Breast Cancer Coalition's 2015 Advocate Leadership Summit & Lobby Day: May 2-5, 2015 Washington DC

Join NBCC leadership from across the country and around the world. Raise your voices in a united and urgent call to know how to end breast cancer by January 2020. Hear plenary speakers on the most innovative work in prevention and metastasis research. Interact one on one with leading experts in Advocate/Researcher Meet-ups. Gain new skills in speaker training and message crafting workshops.

WBCC will be there! Find out how you can be there too at Deadline2020.org. Click the "Get Involved" tab and follow it to registration information. You can participate in a fundraising effort to earn free registration and/or lodging by becoming a Deadline Champion! All funds must be raised by March 15, so take a look and get started now!



Wisconsin Advocates Bonnie Anderson, Eric Buhler and Kathleen Harris are joined by NBCC President Fran Visco for a meeting with Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin – 2014 Lobby Day



WBCC advocate Eric Buhler boards the bus for Lobby Day on Capitol Hill



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WBCC MISSION

The Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition brings Wisconsin voices together to Stand Up and Speak Out about breast cancer with:

- Education** – spotlighting critical breast cancer issues
- Collaboration** – empowering through strategic alliances
- Legislation** – influencing policy making.

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Don't forget to follow us on Twitter (@wbcc2) and Facebook to get the most current updates and articles on WBCC and breast cancer research.

