

Men and Breast Cancer

Sexual stereotypes have been a problem for ages. Nowhere is this more evident than in breast cancer statistics. Women are reminded by their doctors, nurses, sisters, mothers, aunts and cousins to make monthly breast exams part of their lives.

Mammograms are recommended as part of a regular physical for women over 40. Support groups exist for women of every age, race, religion and sexual orientation. Men are ignored or rebuffed, unless they are included as caregivers.

This introduction from one web site: "...empowers *women* who are newly diagnosed with breast cancer by providing them with a variety of resources to help them..."

Another feature: "70% of all *women* who develop breast cancer have no risk factors."

Local fundraising events have fought to keep men from participating since they are not part of the sisterhood.

The truth is that men get breast cancer. They may not expect to and they may not get diagnosed, but they become members of this club much more often than anyone looking at the literature would believe. Close to one percent of all breast cancer patients are male. That means for every hundred diagnosed cases, one will be a man. When men are diagnosed they tend to have later stage, less treatable breast cancer. Men are dying from this disease because the focus has been on women only.

There has been some research on breast cancer in men. Several risk factors have been identified. Many of the risk factors for men are the same as for women. There is an increased risk for men of Jewish or African American heritage or who have a family history that includes genetic mutations associated with breast cancer.

Jobs that involve exposure to high temperatures and other environmental hazards such as exposure to electromagnetic fields or ionizing radiation have been linked to breast cancer in men.

Medical conditions that cause increases in estrogen levels or decreases in testosterone can cause changes in male breast tissue resulting in cancer. Mumps after childhood and Klinefelter's syndrome are other medical conditions that increase the risk of male breast cancer.

Symptoms are similar to breast cancer in women. A lump near the areola may be a sign of infiltrating ductal carcinoma. Nearly 90% of male breast cancer belongs in this category. However, men can also contract inflammatory breast cancer which presents as a rash or orange peel like texture of the skin.

Nipple discharge, an inverted nipple or swelling of the breast should be followed up by the same diagnostic tests that women with these symptoms receive. A mammogram, sonogram and biopsy if necessary should be obtained as soon as possible.

It is time to end the silence surrounding male breast cancer. Breast cancer is a treatable disease and the earlier it is diagnosed, the more likely it is that treatments will be effective - no matter what gender you belong to.

Courtesy of www.malecare.com