



A Newsletter from Africa Cancer Care Incorporated

January Is National Cervical Cancer Month

Although cervical cancer is preventable, it still affects women all over the world especially in developing African countries. In the US, the incidence of cervical cancer is twice as common among Hispanic women as non-Hispanic women and about 50% more common in African American women than non-Hispanic women.

Cervical cancer occurs more frequently in mid life. It is mostly found in women younger than 50 years, rare in women below 20 and occurs in women over 65 in about 20% of most cases.

Death rates from cervical cancer have decreased considerably.

According to the American Cancer Society (2009), cervical cancer mortality rates declined by 74% between 1955 and 1992

and continue to decline by 4% each year. This decrease is

largely due to the discovery of the Pap smear test; a simple, inexpensive outpatient procedure. Pap tests allow for early identification of pre-cancerous cells which can prevent further progression to cervical cancer.



ACCI is calling on all women to get screened this month especially if you fall within the following risk groups: 1) early sexual activity, 2) multiple sexual partners, 3) family history, 4) obesity, 5) improper use of hormone replacement therapy, and 6) poor female hygiene.

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ACCI will be conducting free Pap smears at **6011 Telephone Rd on Saturday, January 30th, 2010 from 9am to 4pm.** Practitioners are welcome to volunteer. We are also accepting supplies for this program.

Welcome to our Inaugural Edition!

We at Africa Cancer Care Inc. (ACCI) are very excited to welcome you to our very first publication of *ACCI Newswatch* newsletter. We intend to utilize this medium and our website (www.africacancercareinc.org) as public platforms to spread our philosophy of cancer awareness and prevention to both the African community and the world at large.

Cancer has become the leading cause of death in the US next to cardiovascular diseases and strokes. Most people are aware of the health problems related to cancer but a good majority are unaware of healthy preventive measures and lifestyles that they can adopt to increase their chances for a relatively cancer-free life. *ACCI Newswatch* will be a premier source for up-to-date information about cancer and cancer-related issues within our community.

About ACCI

- Non-profit organization made up of physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals to promote cancer awareness
- Founded by Dr Iwuanyanwu in 2004 in response to alarming cancer rates in African countries
- Conducts medical missions and community awareness programs in various cities in US and Africa
- Received the Presidential Volunteer Service Award in 2008



January (contd)

Human papillomavirus (HPV) has been linked to cervical cancer in recent years. There are many different types of HPV virus but types 16 and 18 have been identified as causative agents in cervical cancer. HPV is sexually transmittable and is usually asymptomatic. **Pre-cancerous stage of cervical cancer is also asymptomatic.** The only method to detect HPV infection and early stages of cervical cancer is by using the Pap test and HPV DNA testing. For more guidelines from the American Cancer Society about how to screen for HPV infections and cervical cancer, visit our webpage at www.africacancercareinc.org.

Vaccines have been developed to protect women against HPV infections. So far, a vaccine that protects against HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18 (Gardasil®) and one that protects against types 16 and 18 (Cervarix®) have been studied. Cervarix was approved in October 2009 by the FDA for use in the US while Gardasil was approved for use in 2006. The FDA also recently approved the use of Gardasil in males to prevent genital warts. Both vaccines require a series of three injections over a 6-month period. Side effects are usually mild. Swelling, short-term redness and soreness at the injection site can occur. Consult your physician about which of these vaccines is best suited for you.

By Dr. Eucharia Iwuanyanwu, PA-C.

Facts about cervical cancer

- Affects the cervix (opening to the uterus)
- Usually found in women below 50 years
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection is an important risk factor
- Pap smear is an effective method to screen for cervical cancer
- Cervical cancer is preventable if proper measures are taken

1st Annual Banquet and Award Night

ACCI hosted its first ever Annual Banquet and Award Night on October 31st, 2009 at the Westin Galleria Hotel in Houston. The event was intended to commemorate various cancer-related activities conducted by ACCI last year and also to recognize some significant individuals in our local community for their exemplary work towards cancer prevention. Among the dignitaries present at the event were Her Excellency, Mrs. Obioma Liyel Imoke, First Lady of Cross Rivers State and the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Hon. Chudi Okafor.

Awards were given to seven distinguished individuals for their remarkable services to cancer prevention. They include Her Excellency, Mrs. Turai Yar' Adua (First Lady of Nigeria); Karen Eubanks Jackson, founder of the Sisters Network; Nancy Brinker, founder of Susan G. Komen for the Cure; Rebecca Doss Chapman; Dr. Lovell A. Jones, co-founder of the Intercultural Cancer Council; Nikki Onyeri, founder of Breast Cancer Foundation; and Dr. Thomas Weber, founder of Colon Cancer Challenge Foundation.

ACCI Reacts to the New Mammography Guidelines

Last November, the U. S. Preventive Services Task Force, an independent, advisory medical panel, released a new set of suggested guidelines for mammography screenings. Their recommendations include starting regular breast cancer screening at age 50 (as opposed to 40) and that women should have mammograms every two years instead of annually.

ACCI believes that these guidelines are misleading with respect to women of African origin and insists that it will continue to advocate pre-existing measures already in use. Studies have shown that more women of African origin develop breast cancer at an early age and a lot more die from this disease. The new guidelines may be adequate for Caucasian and Hispanic women but it certainly overlooks the aggressive nature of this disease among African women.

With cancer prevention in mind, ACCI encourages all women to continue mammogram screenings on a yearly basis and to begin their initial mammogram at age 40. To read the entire press release, please visit our webpage at www.africacancercareinc.org.



Photos from Award Night



Some guests mingling during the cocktail and silent auction right before the event.



Her Excellency, Mrs. Obioma Liyel Imoke, wife of the Governor of Cross Rivers State, giving the opening speech.



Dr. Eucharia Iwuanyanwu receiving an award recognizing her latest achievements.



Dr. Eucharia Iwuanyanwu unveiling a model of the future site of the International Cancer Center in Abuja.



Kuumba House Dancers were part of the featured entertainment for the event.



A photograph of the plaques given to the awardees during the event.

October '09 Medical Mission: Full Report

This medical mission to Nigeria occurred in Jos, the capital of Plateau State from October 5th to 14th. Our efforts were divided between three regional hospitals: Dadinkowa General Hospital, where most of the public health education and cancer screenings were conducted; Plateau State General Hospital, where all the surgical cases were handled; and Government Hospital in Basa, where we addressed eye cases only.

During that period, our team examined approximately 1200 patients in Dadinkowa and 750 of these patients were screened for cervical, breast, colorectal and prostate cancers. The incidence of cervical and breast cancers were noticeably high. Another incidental finding observed was a high prevalence of untreated hypertension cases. The blood pressures of some of these patients were overly elevated that we had to dispense blood pressure medications immediately to them and then referred them to the Plateau State Hospital for follow-ups.

During this mission we also performed free surgical procedures including lumpectomies, myomectomies (fibroid removal), thyroidectomies, about 120 altogether. These procedures were facilitated by some local surgeons who volunteered their help to the mission. The state commissioner of Health, a practicing pathologist, organized microscopic examination of all slides prepared from cervical smears and biopsies and he even looked at a few slides himself. One of the local governments in the area we were also provided resources to allow cataract removals from about 115 patients. The government also provided 85 pairs of prescription glasses to some patients that could not afford to obtain new ones.

The Cancer Walk-A-Thon on October 10th in Jos was a success. The five mile walk originated from the local park, through the central open market and government-reserved living areas, and ended at Plateau State Hospital. Many locals joined the walk including some elderly retired teachers who had pledged to continue the grass-root awareness effort. On the last day of the mission, the Governor and First Lady of Plateau State promised to cover treatment expenses for new cases discovered and they announced plans to establish a cancer screening center as well as support the personnel who were trained during the mission.



The medical mission team headed by Dr. Eucharia Iwuanyanwu (third from right).

January 17-23 Is Healthy Weight Week

It is a well known fact that obesity can lead to heart problems and other health issues. Obesity is also linked by researchers to cancers of the breast, colon, rectum, kidney, liver, pancreas, and prostate. Our society has taken a more proactive approach in dealing with excess body weight in recent years, however, more effort and education is needed to control this looming threat to our physical wellbeing.

Physical activity and healthy eating are primary components in maintaining a healthy weight. Physical fitness experts recommend exercising 4-6 times a week for at least 45 minutes to sustain healthy body weight. Exercises can take any form and do not necessarily have to be exhausting to be successful as long as some aerobic, cardiovascular, endurance or strength training is achieved.

Although genetic disposition is a factor in normal body weight, our daily diets and food consumption actually determines our overall weight condition. Eating more servings of fruits and vegetables, whole grain products like oatmeal, fish and chicken instead of beef, baked and broiled foods instead of fried can really make a difference. Stress also affects the body's metabolism rate and weight so reducing stress levels helps in maintaining healthy weight.

By Dr. Eucharia Iwuanyanwu, PA-C.