



Environmental Chemicals & Breast Cancer Silent Spring Institute Study

By Vrishali Subramanian

For many women, the following list of activities is typical:

- ✱ Wash hair
- ✱ Make omelet and toast for breakfast
- ✱ Drive Sammy to school
- ✱ Dust and polish living room furniture
- ✱ Do laundry
- ✱ Take Sammy out for cheeseburger and fries after school

PS: DRINK A LITER OF WATER!

Can you identify at least one suspected mammary carcinogen (chemical that causes breast cancer) that you may be exposed to in performing these actions? Which chemicals are present in the products you use every day or which pollutants are rampant in your environment that may increase your risk of getting the disease?

Personal care products like shampoo may contain residual levels of 1,4-dioxane. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) is coated on cookware to make it stick-resistant. Benzene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are present in automobile exhaust and are significant air pollutants. Carbon tetrachloride is a chlorinated solvent found in a wide variety of cleaning formulations. Amsonic acid is a whitening agent in laundry detergents. Heterocyclic aromatic amines and acrylamide are formed while cooking meat and starch-rich food at high temperatures. MX is a by-product of drinking water disinfection. Most of these chemicals are classified by regulatory authorities as possible mammary carcinogens, and animal studies and epidemiologic data link these chemicals to breast cancer.

This is just a small sample of chemicals listed in Silent Spring Institute's (SSI) online database of mammary carcinogens. The database is a product of a research endeavor, funded by Susan G. Komen for the Cure, on the environmental and nongenetic links to breast cancer. The study was done by SSI, with additional researchers from Harvard University, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and the University of Southern California. Researchers pored over five cancer databases and summarized our

current knowledge of the environmental factors that can influence breast cancer risk. If you find the scenario described at the beginning of this article scary, you will be interested to know that of the 216 mammary carcinogens identified by the study, 73 are present in consumer products or food, 35 are air pollutants, 25 are associated with occupational exposures affecting more than 5,000 women every year, and 29 are produced in the United States in amounts exceeding a million pounds per year. The SSI research yielded a series of five articles that were published in a supplement of the journal *Cancer* on May 14, 2007, and two comprehensive, searchable online databases, *Mammary Carcinogens Review* and *Epidemiology Reviews*.¹



The environmental causes of breast cancer have not received enough research attention, especially for a disease that is the leading killer of women living in the United States who are in their late 30s to early 50s.² Currently, evaluating a woman's breast cancer risk focuses on family history and genetics, which are responsible for only a small percentage of breast cancer cases. Many women with the disease are at a loss to understand, "why me?" Mounting evidence suggests that something in our environment is contributing to the breast cancer epidemic. The fact that industrialized countries have a five-fold

continued on page 7

INSIDE

| | |
|---|---|
| EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN • Moving Beyond the Personal in Environmental Health | 2 |
| A Journey Into the World of Pink Ribbon Marketing | 4 |
| BCA Cheers STELLAR Cancellation | 6 |



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Moving Beyond the Personal in Environmental Health

By Barbara A. Brenner

Many people are rightfully concerned about their personal exposure to environmental contaminants. At every BCA presentation on breast cancer and the environment, folks ask us what they can do to reduce incidences of exposures in their daily lives. Though we do our best to answer these questions, we also know that individual

actions, no matter how well intended, will not be enough to clean up the toxic mess that we as a society have made. So, in addition to urging people to protect themselves and their families from environmental toxins, we also encourage people to think about how they can get involved in doing things that will help make personal protections unnecessary.

The best example of why this matters is one I heard some years ago from Sandra Steingraber, biologist, poet, and environmental health activist, when she and I presented together at a conference. Some people in the audience asked whether Sandra would advise using a filter on showerheads to reduce exposure to the chlorine in water. Sandra noted that people are exposed to more chlorine through their skin when they shower than when they drink tap water, so filtering chlorine out of shower and bath water

is a good idea on an individual basis. But she also noted that, when the filters outlive their usefulness, they have to be disposed of in landfills. Eventually, the chlorine from the filters will end up back in the environment. Wouldn't it be more effective to organize the community to demand a water filtration system that is not based on chlorine?

Individual solutions aren't bad, but they rarely lead to the kind of fundamental social changes that are necessary to build a sustainable, relatively toxic-free environment for everyone.

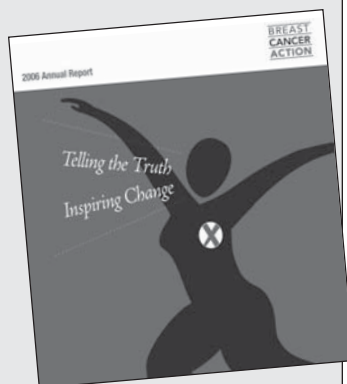
Individuals still need to protect their health, but there is rarely a situation in which the only options available are those that stop at the threshold of their homes. For example, if you've decided that you shouldn't use pesticides in or around your home, you can also help educate others about the importance of the choice you are making. If you've chosen to use only body care products that do not have parabens or phthalates in them, you can get involved in the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics to encourage cosmetics companies to make safer products for everyone. If you've decided to use public transit when possible, you can also push car manufacturers to make vehicles that don't depend on fossil fuels, which create exhaust that causes breast cancer and other illnesses.

Much of contemporary American society is focused on individual choice and personal activity, with little regard for that activity's impact on the common good. Environmental health is one arena where it is clear that only by moving beyond the personal will we ever generate the political will necessary to make the world a better place for everyone. So, the next time you do something to protect your and your family's health, consider how you can take that effort a step further by getting involved with folks who, just like you, want to reverse the tide of toxic exposures. ☺

“ Much of contemporary American society is focused on individual choice and personal activity, with little regard for that activity's impact on the common good. ”

2006 ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE

BCA's 2006 Annual Report, entitled *Telling the Truth, Inspiring Change*, is now available online at www.bcaction.org/Pages/LearnAboutUs/AnnualReports. The annual report highlights BCA's programs and campaigns in 2006, and honors the many individuals and organizations that support our work. If you would like a print copy mailed to you, contact us toll-free at 877/2STOPBC, or info@bcaction.org.



JOIN THE SISTER STUDY

Help Find the Causes of Breast Cancer

The Sister Study is a nationwide effort, conducted by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, to learn about the environmental and genetic causes of breast cancer. The study needs to enroll 50,000 women whose sisters have had breast cancer, and with your help, it can. For more information, visit www.sisterstudy.org, or www.estudiodehermanas.org (Spanish). Call toll-free 877/4SISTER (877/474-7837), or deaf/hard of hearing call 866/TTY-4SIS (866/889-4747).

FROM THE EDITOR

Stopping Cancer Where It Starts

By Katrina Kahl

Since our founding, BCA has called for the true prevention of breast cancer by identifying and eradicating the environmental toxins that contribute to the disease. BCA's "Stop Cancer Where It Starts" campaign is the foundation of much of our work, as we ask the research community to stop studying "pills for prevention" and instead focus attention on what in the environment is making so many people sick.

With this focus, we are excited by two recent developments: the publication of the Silent Spring Institute's (SSI) study on environmental factors and breast cancer and the cancellation of the STELLAR trial. Our cover story highlights some of the key findings of the SSI study, which provides further evidence that many commonly used products contain chemicals that are associated with breast cancer, and asks for policies to be enacted that protect us all from these dangers.

The cancellation of the STELLAR trial was a major victory for BCA and our members (see page 6). The trial would have assigned women without breast cancer to take letrozole (an aromatase inhibitor) to reduce their risk of getting the disease. BCA has long opposed trials of "pills for prevention," believing that any pill powerful enough to prevent breast cancer would most certainly result in another disease. The cancellation of the STELLAR trial shows that the voices of activists are being heard by policy makers, bringing about changes that put the interests of women first.

Inspired by these events, BCA is moving forward with Think Before You Pink, this year focusing on "pinkwashers"—

companies that market pink ribbon campaigns but make products that are contributing to the epidemic. The article by Kira Jones, BCA's summer intern, highlights the problem of automakers marketing pink ribbon products while producing polluting cars (see page 4).

Continuing with the theme of environmental toxins, the book *Toxic Exposures*, by Phil Brown, looks at the impact of environmental toxins on our health and argues that organized social movements are crucial in combating environmental diseases, including breast cancer. In her review, Jill Chapin discusses how the information presented in this book can empower ordinary citizens to take action to protect public health (see page 5).

We hope the articles in this issue will inspire you to take action to help stop cancer where it starts. BCA will continue this work, together with our members and other activists, until we know how—and have taken measures to—truly prevent breast cancer. ☺



“The cancellation of the STELLAR trial shows that the voices of activists are being heard by policy makers, bringing about changes that put the interests of women first.”

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A Journey Into the World of Pink Ribbon Marketing

By Kira Jones

For the last two years, the breast cancer movement has been the focus of both my personal and academic interests, so when I consider how many times I've used the phrase "I had no idea..." as an intern at BCA this summer, I'm more than slightly alarmed. It's not that I'm necessarily concerned about my knowledge of this topic; rather, I'm shocked by how often the phrase has been my response to what we currently don't know when it comes to breast cancer detection, treatment, research, and pink ribbon marketing.

My first introduction to BCA took place during my last semester as an undergraduate at the University of Utah. At that time, I was planning to attend graduate school to study how feminism was represented in the contemporary media, so I'd enrolled in an introductory feminist theory course to get some exposure to the field. When I reached the middle of the semester, burnout was on the horizon. So, when my instructor, former BCA board member Kim Lau, told my class we wouldn't have any readings for a week in October, I was thrilled. Instead, we were going to study National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM) as a contemporary feminist issue.

“Companies need to disclose where they plan to donate their money and how much they'll give, while also ensuring their products are good for our health.”

I didn't know a lot about breast cancer when Lau informed my class of the upcoming lesson plan, and I was secretly grateful we'd be talking about the subject in class, because of my own fears about the disease. When I was in junior high, I had a neighbor who died of breast

cancer when it metastasized to her brain. I worried about the disease personally and was also quite aware of its ability to claim lives.

I was also very well acquainted with the pink ribbon. I'd noticed the ribbon on Yoplait yogurt lids, bags of M&Ms, and Tic Tacs. Although I was gaining very little knowledge about the complexity of breast cancer from these products, I was definitely learning how to associate the color pink with the disease. If I walked into a store, I didn't even need to see a

ribbon to know the product was for breast cancer awareness. If the item was a shade of pink, my brain automatically made the connection—even if it wasn't the right one.

This was my knowledge of breast cancer when Lau announced our assignment for the week. She told us to keep an eye out for pink ribbon products, familiarize ourselves with BCA's Think Before You Pink (TB4UP) campaign, and read Barbara Ehrenreich's article "Welcome to Cancerland." She wanted us to find examples of items sold during October and to see if it was possible to determine how much corporations were giving to breast cancer and where the money was going.

Delighted by the fact that I would simply have to pay attention to my surroundings, surf the Web, and read a magazine article to complete the assignment, I took stock of the pink ribbon products I had in my possession. There were two items—pink ribbon Post-it Notes and a pink ribbon pendant. I'd purchased the Post-it Notes because I needed them and figured, why not buy a pack with the ribbon? When I bought the pendant, the cashier asked if I wanted to donate to breast cancer research. I really wanted to support the cause, and this seemed like a good way to do that.

After I noted my own pink ribbon products and spotted a few more in the grocery store, I went to the TB4UP web site. It was only after I scrolled through the 2005 edition of the "Parade of Pink" that I realized how many products were being sold during October, how much money was being made by the companies, and how little of that money was actually going to research. When I read that Cartier was selling a watch for \$3,900 but capped its maximum donation at \$30,000, I was shocked! I was suddenly very aware that my own contribution to the cause, by way of buying things, was probably not the most effective form of activism.

Before visiting the TB4UP web site, I hadn't considered any of the critical questions BCA encourages consumers to ask before shelling out money for pink ribbon marketing campaigns. I didn't know how much money from each of the products sold was going toward breast cancer or what percentage of the purchase price this represented. I didn't know the maximum amount that would be donated, and I definitely didn't know



Kira Jones was a BCA summer intern.

continued on page 9

BOOK REVIEW

Toxic Exposures: Contested Illnesses and the Environmental Health Movement

By Phil Brown

Columbia University Press, 2007; \$29.50

Reviewed by Jill Chapin

Have you ever read a book and wished you had written it yourself, because so much of it reflected your own feelings? That's how I felt when I read Phil Brown's *Toxic Exposures*. He looks at the impact of the environment on our health, and how citizens and scientists are joining together to address the poisoning of America. According to Brown, ordinary citizens are no longer accepting data that contradict their own reality, and they're working hard to refocus research and funds to acknowledge their firsthand experiences.

His book covers the environmental issues that affect asthma, Gulf War-related illnesses, and breast cancer. This is a book that is to be underlined, mulled over, reread, and kept nearby for quick reference. It will validate your intuitive sense that something is very wrong, and that we must all act to be the engine of change.

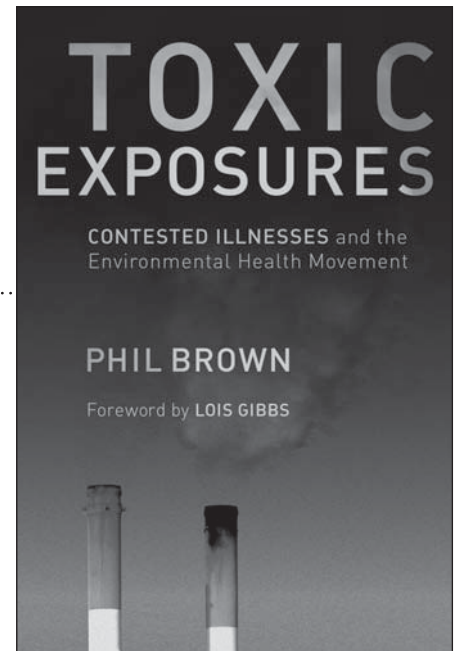
The chapter on breast cancer was most illuminating. Breast cancer activists base their new paradigm on the precautionary principle, which calls for shifting the burden of proof of harm from the people exposed to environmental contaminants to the industries that produce them. This principle is what directs the course of public health and safety issues in Europe. Indication of harm, not proof of harm is what guides those who follow this principle. The European Union (EU) is far more proactive than the United States in removing toxins from the environment before conclusive studies are completed, mainly because they realize there may never be irrefutable evidence. But the possibility of harm is enough for them to take action.

Without telling you all the ugly details about the business of cancer, it's enough to know that supposedly committed cancer organizations, such as the National Cancer Institute, invest relatively little on research that examines environmental links to cancer. Instead, they focus on genetics and diet, as if we had suddenly mutated or were making personal decisions to live recklessly. But some decisions are out of our control. How can we avoid the contaminants in the air we breathe or the food and water we ingest? How can our lifestyle be altered to avoid the effects of massive agricultural pesticide spraying or the chemically treated household goods that are ubiquitous in our society?

The chapter on breast cancer is reason enough to read this book. Brown cites a few activist organizations, including BCA,

as leaders in focusing on the environmental causes of breast cancer. He praises BCA for its policy of not accepting funds from corporations that may create a real or apparent conflict of interest for BCA or whose practices endanger public health or may contribute to cancer incidence.

After reading *Toxic Exposures*, I realized that cancer used to terrify me. Now, the business of cancer infuriates me. But I have come to understand that while fear can paralyze you, anger can galvanize you into action, and it is often the first step toward empowerment. In the words of Gandhi, you must be the change you wish to see in the world. Begin your journey toward change by first reading *Toxic Exposures*. ☉



Thanks

BCA extends a special thanks to:

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- ☉ Rape Trauma Services for training BCA staff on providing support for vulnerable callers
- ☉ Laura Dawson for joining BCA's Development Committee
- ☉ Annette Schultz for allowing us to share her story on BCA's testimonial card
- ☉ Diane Tompkins for her participation with BCA's Strategic Planning Core Committee

BCA Cheers STELLAR Cancellation

By Mary DeLucco

When the National Cancer Institute (NCI) decided in June not to go ahead with the P-4 chemoprevention trial (STELLAR), BCA applauded the decision.

The STELLAR trial would have randomly assigned almost 13,000 women who do not have breast cancer but are at high risk for the disease to receive either raloxifene or letrozole (an aromatase inhibitor) for five years. In addition to its long-held concerns about attempts to prevent breast cancer with pills, BCA was opposed to this trial in particular, based on information it has obtained about the side effects of aromatase inhibitors (AI), including letrozole, in women with breast cancer (for more information, read BCA's report, *Side Effects Revealed: Women's Experiences With Aromatase Inhibitors*, available online at www.bcaction.org/AIReport).

BCA cheers the cancellation in part because of BCA's opposition to a pills-based approach to breast cancer

prevention. BCA is concerned that pills to "prevent" breast cancer will always result in disease substitution. (For more information, visit www.bcaction.org/bcapolicies.)

NCI director John Niederhuber's reason for canceling the trial echoed BCA's concerns. In a written statement, Niederhuber said the dangers of the drugs outweighed their benefits and said the agency was committed to finding options that "do not ask otherwise healthy people to trade cancer risk for the increased risk of other serious health conditions."

Niederhuber's statement made clear that the dangerous side effects of the drugs, not the expense—he has estimated the trial's cost at upwards of \$100 million—was the factor in his decision.

With this decision, the NCI put public health first, protecting many women from the potentially dangerous side effects of powerful drugs. Kudos to the NCI. ☉

CALENDAR



November 8–9, 2007

Emerging Topics in Breast Cancer and Environment Research in Cincinnati, Ohio

The 4th annual national scientific conference presents the latest findings from the Breast Cancer and Environment Research Centers of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

November 15–17, 2007

Society for Integrative Oncology: Expanding Horizons in Collaborative Cancer Care in San Francisco, CA

The 4th annual international conference offers a multidisciplinary environment for health practitioners to learn how to integrate the latest evidence-based complementary and alternative modalities into conventional cancer therapy. For more information, visit www.integrativeonc.org.

December 13–16, 2007

San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium

SABCS is the largest annual medical conference dedicated exclusively to breast cancer research. Participants will include researchers, advocates, physicians, and other health care providers. For more information and to register, visit www.sabcs.org.

TAKE ACTION: THINK BEFORE YOU PINK



In its sixth year, BCA's Think Before You Pink campaign focuses on "pinkwashers." BCA uses the term "pinkwashers" to describe companies that say they care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon campaign but manufacture products that are contributing to the epidemic.

One example is the car companies. Car exhaust contains chemicals that have been linked to breast cancer, yet companies like Ford, Mercedes, and BMW urge consumers to buy and drive cars to raise funds for breast cancer organizations. Companies that market dairy products, like Yoplait, are another example, encouraging people to support the cause by eating yogurt made with rBGH (rBST), despite the numerous health concerns (including breast cancer) that have prompted most other industrialized nations to ban its use. And, cosmetics companies such as Estee Lauder and Avon have put pink ribbons on their products, many of which contain ingredients linked to breast cancer and birth defects. If cosmetics companies really cared about women, shouldn't they replace those toxic chemicals with safer alternatives?

This October, Think Before You Pink is highlighting the pink ribbon campaigns of three car companies—Ford, BMW, and Mercedes. During National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we are asking people to contact these companies and tell them to clean up their cars if they really want to help put an end to this disease.

We'll also provide suggestions on other actions we can all take to reduce our exposure to the toxic chemicals in car exhaust. Visit www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org for more information and to take action.

think before

you pink

Silent Spring...

continued from page 1

higher incidence of the disease, with incidence continuing to rise rapidly among immigrant populations, lends credence to environmental links to breast cancer. And, in studies of populations carrying the same genetic material, such as identical twins, incidence varies considerably, suggesting that there is far more to breast cancer risk than genetics.

The factors examined in the SSI study include commonly used chemicals, pollutants, and lifestyle factors, such as diet and physical activity. How can these factors affect your risk of developing breast cancer? Chemicals and pollutants that are mammary carcinogens can cause gene mutations or damage DNA, promote tumor growth, and/or modify hormonal activity. For example, synthetic estrogens and chemicals that mimic the actions of estrogen may interact with estrogen receptors and affect mammary gland development. Dietary factors, such as alcohol consumption, can increase breast cancer risk. Additionally, diet and physical activity affect weight maintenance, and adult weight gain is associated with breast cancer. Excess fat is a source of estrogen in postmenopausal women and also serves as long-term storage for fat-soluble poisons that enter your body. Science bolsters the case for exercise so strongly that you really need a good reason not to do it.

In order to understand the implications of this study better, it is important to understand how the carcinogenic potential of chemicals is assessed. The key methods used are *in vitro* (tests performed in a controlled environment and not in a living organism) or other short-term tests, animal experiments, and epidemiological studies. *In vitro* tests study the carcinogenicity of a chemical in an appropriate cell culture in the laboratory. For example, because breast tumors may be caused by hormonal changes, testing the action of a chemical in cells that are sensitive to hormones is important for establishing links to breast cancer.

Animal experiments yield more information about a chemical's carcinogenicity than the other methods but require a significant commitment of time and money; experiments on rodents take two years and cost from \$2 million to \$3 million for each chemical tested. The United States National Toxicology Program's animal testing procedure involves dosing male and female animals with the chemical in question for two years and counting the tumors in all the organs. The test is made as relevant to humans as possible by choosing a sensitive animal (usually rats or mice), an appropriate exposure pathway (through the skin, food, inhalation, injection, etc.), and a suitable number of doses.

Epidemiology is the study of correlations between a disease and its possible causes in populations. A well-designed epidemiological study showing a positive association between an exposure and a disease is one of the most convincing types of evidence of a chemical's carcinogenicity in humans, especially if an animal test also implicates the chemical. More

significantly, epidemiology has helped establish cancer as an environmental disease.

Most of the chemicals in the SSI *Mammary Carcinogens Review* database are mutagenic (cause genes to mutate), and all caused breast tumors in animals. Our risk from these potential carcinogens is further characterized in the database by providing information on chemical use, exposure opportunities, and current regulations. The SSI *Epidemiology Reviews* database critically reviews 450 studies on associations between breast cancer and environmental pollutants, diet, physical activity, and body size. Of these four factors, diet received the most coverage by epidemiologists and environmental pollutants the least, limited to studies on polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), organochlorine pesticides, organic solvents, and dioxins. Both of the SSI databases review key experimental details and provide information on the strengths and limitations of the research. The environmental pollutants that emerge as the biggest culprits from the review databases are PCBs, PAHs, and organic solvents.

“... much of this research has not been reflected in policy outcomes.”

The SSI study may be described as translational research, a term traditionally used to describe the efficient movement of research from the laboratory to better practices and products in the clinic or industry. SSI's extensive research on the environment and breast cancer has been fashioned into a tool that can be used by other scientists, clinicians, policy makers, and the general public for better decision making. For scientists, this is a valuable summarization of what we currently know and what we still need to find out. We need to establish more conclusive links between the environment and breast cancer, safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals, and ways to reduce harmful emissions. For clinicians, the SSI study is a starting point to understand and advise breast cancer patients along the lines of environmental medicine, including evaluating potentially exposed people and advising high-risk populations to avoid certain chemical exposures.

For policy makers in the United States, this information is a tool as well as a reproach, because much of this research has not been reflected in policy outcomes. Out of 80,000 chemicals registered for use in the United States, only about 1,000 chemicals have been tested for mammary carcinogenicity. About 3,000 chemicals are produced in quantities greater than one million pounds every year, and the mammary carcinogenicity of only 33 percent of these has been evaluated.³ Penny-wise and pound foolish, policy makers have split hairs

continued on page 8

Silent Spring...

continued from page 7

over the necessity of more comprehensive evaluations of health effects and more regulation of these chemicals as breast cancer continues to extract a heavy financial and human toll.

For example, the cosmetics industry in the United States continues to sell women products containing potential mammary carcinogens, because the industry is poorly regulated and the chemicals are inadequately assessed. However, policy makers in Europe and California are showing the way in chemical policy reform, enacting legislation aimed at regulating the chemicals in cosmetics. Europe's Registration Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals (REACH) came into effect in June 2007. It gives the chemical industry until 2018 to register with the European Chemicals Agency the approximately 30,000 chemicals that have been added to personal care consumer items. It puts the burden on industry to provide information on potential hazards and to identify measures to ensure safe use. REACH also encourages companies to switch to safer alternatives when available and allows for more rapid bans of chemicals that have unacceptable risks. California's Safe Cosmetics Act of 2005, which BCA co-sponsored, requires cosmetics companies to report to the state any ingredients that are known or suspected to cause cancer or birth defects. This type of legislation needs to be enacted across the United States in order to protect public health.

Additionally, many chemicals that have been analyzed for their health effects need to be looked at again for endocrine (hormonal) effects, which occur at lower levels of exposure and can cause reproductive cancers in women and men. Estrogen challenges the traditional "dose makes the poison" paradigm in

toxicology by affecting estrogen receptors differently at low and high doses. Therefore, testing the estrogenic effects of chemicals at low doses is necessary to fully understand the risks associated with those chemicals. Estrogenic compounds contained in pharmaceutical and personal care products continue to enter our environment via unregulated dumping and have been found in rivers and fish. The Environmental Protection Agency's proposed program of chemical screening of endocrine disruptors by industry has been criticized by some scientists as favoring the chemical industry.⁴ (For more information, read *Comment on EPA's Endocrine Disruptor Screening Program* in BCA's July ealert at www.bcaction.org/ealert). These criticisms should be considered before the program is adopted.

The subject of environmental links to cancer has reemerged in the centenary of Rachel Carson's birth. One of the first to suggest environmental links to cancer, she courageously challenged the chemical industry, which sought to discredit her, while living with breast cancer. Let us continue her work, this time together and with better tools. ☉

Vrishali Subramanian is a graduate student specializing in Environmental Policy at Georgia Institute of Technology. She has an undergraduate degree in environmental engineering and a master's degree in environmental toxicology.

- 1 Available online at www.silent.spring.org/sciencereview
- 2 Julia Green Brody, et al., "Environmental Pollutants, Diet, Physical Activity, Body Size, and Breast Cancer," *Cancer*, 2007; 109(S12), May 14, 2007.
- 3 Marla Cone, "Common Chemicals Are Linked to Breast Cancer," *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 2007.
- 4 Sue Goetinck Ambrose, "Scientists Criticize EPA Chemical Screening Program," the *Dallas Morning News*, May 27, 2007.

BE THE SOURCE OF BREAST CANCER ACTION'S SUCCESS!

Breast Cancer Action makes no small plans—as you can tell from the articles in this issue! With your investment in our work, we will continue to reach ambitious goals and to effect change that others consider impossible. Individuals like you fund more than half of BCA's annual budget. Of every dollar raised, 80 percent is spent on our programs.

BCA is the only national breast cancer organization that does not accept funding from the pharmaceutical industry or from any corporations profiting from or contributing to the problem of cancer. Our independence—and your support—make it possible for us to challenge anything that stands in the way of getting answers about the breast cancer epidemic.

Invest in BCA's important work today in any of the following ways:

- Make a gift by check or credit card** with the enclosed envelope or by phone 877/2-STOP-BC.
- Donate online** at www.bcaction.org/donate.
- Transfer stock** or other securities to Breast Cancer Action. Call us for account information.
- Join the Susan Stone Circle of monthly givers.** \$25 a month is \$300 annually! Sign up online.
- Pledge** now and pay later!
- Include BCA in your will** and become a member of the Elenore Pred Legacy Circle.
- Ask your employer to match** your BCA gift!
- Choose BCA in your workplace giving campaign.**
- Invest in BCA's national advocacy work** by making a gift to the Susan Claymon Fund.
- Host a house party** in honor of BCA. Call us for a house party guide!

Questions? Contact Sarah Harding, BCA's development associate, at 415/243-9301, ext. 17, or sharding@bcaction.org.

Pink Ribbon Marketing...

continued from page 4

how much money was being spent marketing the product in the first place. I vaguely knew which organizations the campaigns were supporting, but I had no idea if the companies were doing anything to make sure their products weren't contributing to the epidemic—I didn't even know I was supposed to be asking that question!

There I was thinking companies were participating in what BCA termed "cause-marketing" because they simply cared about women's lives. Little did I know they stood to benefit a great deal by doing so. In her book *Pink Ribbons Inc.*, Samantha King explains that cause marketing is a way for "companies and brands to associate themselves with a cause as a means to build the reputation of a brand, increase profit, develop employee loyalty to the company, and add to their reputation as good corporate citizens."¹ So much for genuine corporate philanthropy.

However, what bothered me most was learning about companies that engage in pink ribbon marketing while making products that are known to cause, or suspected of causing, breast cancer. These "pinkwashers," as BCA refers to them, were claiming to care about women's health while simultaneously making products linked to the disease.

The following semester, I decided to take a critical research methods course. The course required one critical essay of publishable quality, and I chose to research the rhetoric of NBCAM and BCA. By the end of the semester, my head was swimming with questions about why, after 20 years of awareness campaigns and research, we didn't know more about breast cancer and its connection with toxins in the environment, and where all the money from pink ribbon campaigns was going. I couldn't let the issue go and took it with me, all the way to Missoula, Montana, where I began graduate school last fall.

I've spent the last year searching for answers to my questions about breast cancer, including the links between the disease and our environment, and trying to explain why the TB4UP campaign is such a significant force in the breast cancer movement. For one study, I showed the TB4UP campaign to college women and found that their perception of activism changed dramatically. Prior to viewing the campaign, the women considered buying things as a mode of (progressive) political activism. Once they learned about TB4UP, they told me they felt more empowered to make a difference by talking to the people they care about, asking questions, and demanding answers about breast cancer.

Because BCA encourages us to become active in the decision-making process, rather than "shopping for the cure," I decided to finally take action and participate in the movement by interning at BCA. My first task was to research pink ribbon products for the Parade of Pink. It is an eye-opening experience to sort through hundreds of items on the Web in an effort to find products that illustrate the magnitude of pink

ribbon marketing. I've spent hours on the phone trying to connect with the one person who knows something—really anything—about how much a product costs, how much a company plans to give, and where the money goes. It's really not as easy as one might think. I often refer to myself

as a "supersleuth" as I navigate my way through automated telephone systems in an effort to actually speak to human beings. No one should have to play detective to get a few simple questions answered.

What bothered me most was...companies that engage in pink ribbon marketing while making products that are known or suspected of contributing to breast cancer.

It isn't just about transparency, though. It's also about accountability. Companies need to disclose where they plan to donate their money and how much they'll give, while also ensuring their products are good for our health.

BCA urges companies that claim to care about breast cancer to start living up to these standards. Once again in October, companies will encourage consumers to buy products many of us can't afford, some of which simultaneously pollute our environment. This fall, the TB4UP campaign will target these polluters, such as the dairy, cosmetic, and auto industries—highlighting the car companies—as examples of pinkwashers.

BCA feels this decision is particularly important given the fact that auto exhaust contains chemicals linked to breast cancer. Both Ford and Mercedes Benz are manufacturing vehicles as part of their cause-marketing campaigns, and BMW will continue its Ultimate Drive campaign, all of which encourage customers to drive polluting cars. The end of a tailpipe is not clean, and a pink ribbon on it doesn't change that fact.

As my internship at BCA comes to an end, I consider my time here to be proof that a young woman with a passion and dedication to a cause, and ability to consume copious amounts of coffee, can be a force in the breast cancer movement. Activism isn't always about doing "big" acts of demonstration. Sometimes it's about small actions such as asking questions and demanding answers from pink ribbon marketers. By believing in the possibility of real change, and acting on those beliefs, we can work to truly eliminate breast cancer. ☺

Kira Jones is a graduate student at the University of Montana in Missoula, where she is studying rhetoric, feminism, women's health issues, and social movement theory.

1 Samantha King, *Pink Ribbons Inc.: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006)

DONATIONS IN HONOR

BCA gratefully acknowledges donations made in honor of the following individuals between May 31, 2007, and July 23, 2007.

Jeffrey Alecci
from Morgan Stanley

Mary Bailey
from Marilyn Miller

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from Crystal M. Land

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from Laurie J. Earp

Joyce Beachy, My Sister
from Janice Richter

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from Mary E. and
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Jean Franklin, PhD
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The Girls
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My Mother, Patricia Hughes
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from Ellen Crowley

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from La Rae M. Buxa

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Want up-to-the-minute news, notices, and action alerts on breast cancer? Sign up for BCA's monthly e-alert! The e-alerts will also let you know when the

newest issue of our bimonthly newsletter, *BCA Source*, has been posted on our web site—so if you'd prefer to download it from the site instead of receiving it in the mail, contact us at 415/243-9301 or info@bcaction.org.

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- Carol Busch**
from Phyllis and
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- Florence Casadei,
My Loving Mother**
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from Brenda Eckles
- Barbara Gittings**
from Del Martin
and Phyllis Lyon
- Lilo Goetrel**
from Charlotte Wallenstein
from Philip A. Wiseman

¿HABLA USTED ESPAÑOL?

Breast Cancer Action's Spanish-language newsletter, *Saber Es Poder* (Knowledge Is Power), is published twice a year. Past issues—which are archived at www.bcaction.org/espanol—have covered a wide range of topics, including tamoxifen and other breast cancer drugs, clinical trials for new breast cancer treatments, ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS), environmental links to breast cancer, and ways to help young women cope with the disease. BCA mails single and multiple copies of *Saber Es Poder* to individuals and institutions around the world. If you would like to add yourself, an organization, or a clinic to our mailing list, or suggest future topics to cover, please contact Brenda Salgado at bsalgado@bcaction.org, 415/243-9301, ext. 14, or (toll-free) 877/278-6722.



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BREAST CANCER ACTION



MISSION STATEMENT

Breast Cancer Action carries the voices of people affected by breast cancer to inspire and compel the changes necessary to end the breast cancer epidemic.

WHAT DOES BCA DO?

- ⊗ Provides information to anyone who needs it via newsletters, web sites, and a toll-free number.
- ⊗ Organizes people to do something besides worry.
- ⊗ Advocates for policy changes directed at achieving true prevention through understanding and eliminating the causes of breast cancer; working toward a true cure with treatments that don't nearly kill people or cause other diseases; and assuring universal access to quality health care.

BCA is committed to the precautionary principle of public health: First, do no harm. We work with other organizations to encourage the use of environmentally safe alternatives to ways of doing business that we know—or have reason to believe—are harmful. BCA also sifts through the stacks of misinformation that now circulate about breast cancer. What you won't learn in the newspaper or on television—or sometimes even from your doctor—is in our highly acclaimed publication, the *BCA Source*.

CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

- ① We are a membership-based organization that values the involvement of grassroots activists throughout the country and around the world to further our mission.
- ② We honor each person's commitment and energy to our mission.
- ③ We are not afraid to examine all sides of all issues.
- ④ We cannot be bought.
- ⑤ We tell the truth about what we discover.
- ⑥ We serve individuals while reaching the broader population.
- ⑦ We address the significance of environmental links to human health.
- ⑧ We encourage people to participate fully in decisions relating to breast cancer.
- ⑨ We believe access to information is vital.
- ⑩ We work for structural changes toward social justice to accomplish our mission.

DO SOMETHING BESIDES WORRY ... JOIN BREAST CANCER ACTION!