Breast Cancer Action

The Politics Behind the Epidemic

Presented by

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Breast Cancer Action’s Perspective

- Breast cancer is a public health issue
- Women are not to blame
- Changes in society are needed to end the epidemic
A Real *Change* in Breast Cancer...

- Public health over private profit at FDA
- Understanding and eliminating environmental causes of cancer
- Create awareness that systemic injustices lead to disparities in breast cancer

...it’s not the kind in your pocket
Breast Cancer is . . .

an epidemic
A new diagnosis every . . .

3.0 minutes
A breast cancer death every . . .

14 minutes
Lifetime Risk of Breast Cancer

1964: 1 in 20

1984: 1 in 14

Today: 1 in 8
What We Hear

“Early detection is your best protection.”


Focus on lifestyle; blame the victim
What We Know

• Risk Factors
  30-50% of all cases:
  • Family history
    • heredity: 10% at most
    • potentially related to shared environment, habits
  • Early menarche / late menopause
  • “Late” first child birth / no child birth
  • Hormone replacement therapy
  • Alcohol consumption
  • Ionizing radiation
Estrogen

- Estrogen stimulates cell proliferation
- Common denominator of “known” risk factors = lifetime exposure to estrogens
- Exposed to estrogen internally and externally
Chemicals in Daily Life
Chemical Use in the United States

- Post - WW II chemical boom
- 100,000 chemicals registered for market use
  - Health data exists for less than 10%
- No adequate U.S. chemical regulation policy
  - Toxic Substances Control Act - 1976
Environmental Injustice

- Unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens (including exposure to unsafe chemicals):
  - Living in more polluted areas
  - Working in higher risk jobs
  - Lower income more likely to be uninsured
What about inequities?

- Caucasian women more likely to get breast cancer
- African-Americans and Latinas more likely to die from the disease – and the “gap” is growing
- Social, biological, environmental factors
- Very little research on disparities
Who’s Holding the Mouthpiece?
Principal corporate sponsor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month

- “Early detection is your best protection”
- Missing in action = cancer *causes*
- Pesticides: Acetochlor
  - Known carcinogen
  - $300 million market
Other Sponsors of Breast Cancer Awareness Events

- **OxyChem** – makes PVC, largest marketer of chlorine products
- **Ford** – has lobbied against emission controls
- **Chevron** – Richmond, CA refinery produces 29 billion lbs. of pollutants per year
Two-timing Companies

Pinkwasher: (pink’-wah-sher) noun. A company that purports to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon campaign, but manufactures products that are linked to the disease.
The Pink Ribbon - A Little History

- Charlotte Haley’s peach ribbon
- Out of protest to National Cancer Institute
- Self/Estee Lauder approached to copy
- Changed to pink
  - Focus groups: pink = pretty, comforting, quieting, feminine
October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Do you think before you pink?
Questions to ask:

- How much money goes to the cause?
  - Is your purchase contributing?
  - Is that amount meaningful to you?
  - Is there a cap?

- Who gets the money?

- What types of programs will be supported?

- Are the products bad for your health?
Pinkwasher Spotlight: YOPLAIT

General Mills Yoplait Yogurt

Save Lids to Save Lives

• 10 cents per lid

• 3 containers a day for 4 months = $36

• Cows treated with rBGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone)
2008
Think Before You Pink Campaign...

This October...
Tell Yoplait
Put a lid on it.

Put a Lid on rBGH!

VICTORY!
Target: Eli Lilly

- Sole manufacturer of rBGH
- Profit cycle
  - Make breast cancer treatment drug: Gemzar
  - Make “pill for prevention”: Raloxifene
  - Now make rBGH, linked to increased risk of breast cancer
Action Works!

- California Safe Cosmetics Legislation (2005)
- Starbucks, Walmart, General Mills, Dannon using rBGH-free dairy
- Safer alternatives increasingly available
Resources

- Safer cleaning products
  - [www.when.org/green-cleaning.html](http://www.when.org/green-cleaning.html)

- Organic food
  - [www.foodnews.org](http://www.foodnews.org)

- Hormone-free Dairy

- Safer personal care products and cosmetics
  - EWG Skin Deep database (www.ewg.org/skindeep)
  - GoodGuide (www.goodguide.com and available by text message)
What YOU Do Matters!

- Ask questions of pink ribbon promotions
- Demand/support safer products
- Write/call/meet with your legislators
- VOTE!

- Get involved with BCA and tell people about us

*People demanding change make it happen!*
YOU can get involved with BCA!

- Signup for BCA’s online newsletter and e-alerts
  www.bcaction.org

- Join BCA on Facebook
  www.facebook.com/BCAction

- Follow BCA on Twitter
  twitter.com/BCAAction

- Volunteer
  info@bcaction.org
Breast Cancer Action

More questions? Contact us!
Email: info@bcaction.org
Toll-free: 877-2STOPBC

Your support counts!

If you’ve been inspired today, consider making a donation of $25 or more. Visit our website to donate now!

www.bcaction.org/donate