

The best-kept secret in Breast Cancer Awareness Month

New government data released today show that more women are contracting breast cancer than ever before. These figures have been released two days after new research revealed that women over 40 fear being struck by the disease more than almost any other life event.

The latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) confirms a relentless upward trend in incidence since 1971. Around 42,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer annually. It is now the commonest cancer in the UK and by far the most common cancer in women. If current trends are allowed to continue, the No More Breast Cancer Campaign estimates that 50,000 women a year will receive a breast cancer diagnosis within a decade.

Women's lifetime risk of breast cancer has until today been estimated at 1 in 9, but the ONS is revising the figure in the light of the latest findings at the request of the No More Breast Cancer Campaign.

"We believe women have the right to know these frightening statistics, and should be asking the government what it is doing to tackle the causes and prevention of the disease," says Alison Craig of Breast Cancer UK.

"The fundamental question is: WHY is breast cancer increasing? The 'Pink' campaigns and Breast Cancer Awareness Month are focussed on detection, drug therapy and reductions in actual deaths. But the solution must involve more than better detection. Many women included in the 'success' statistics suffer the severe trauma of having to undergo mastectomy to survive the disease."

According to Breast Cancer UK's Di Ward, author of *Breast cancer: an environmental disease*, the government and cancer charities should acknowledge that fewer than 50 per cent of breast cancer cases can be explained by the 'known' and 'probable' risk factors: age, late onset of menopause, increased body weight, diet, late-age pregnancy. "Lifestyle changes are not enough," says Di. "Our campaign is demanding that the role of carcinogens and hormone-disruptors in our environment should be investigated, and our exposures reduced."

There is an increasing body of scientific evidence indicating the role of chemicals and pesticides, some of which are proven to disrupt hormones, in the causation of breast cancer.

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ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. The Office for National Statistics has published today the Cancer Registration Statistics England, 2004, the latest available data
www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=7720&Pos=1&ColRank=2&Rank=272
2. 120.8 per 100,000 women in 2004 in England were diagnosed with the disease, compared with 120.3 per 100,000 in 2003. This is a rise from 103.5 per 100,000 women in 1994.
3. October is designated Breast Cancer Awareness Month, represented by a 'pink' theme, and supported by Cancer Research UK , Breakthrough Breast Cancer, Breast Cancer Campaign, Breast Cancer Care and Cancer BACUP.
4. Research indicating that breast cancer is among the top three concerns was carried out among more than 7,000 women by Woman & Home magazine and reported in The Daily Telegraph on 26th September 2006
www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/09/25/nforties25.xml
5. According to Hospital Episode Statistics data from 1989-2004 (NHS Hospitals , England), approximately 53,000 mastectomies (surgical amputation of the breast) are carried out every year.
6. One of the early successes of Breast Cancer UK was our role in the Europe-wide ban of the organochlorine pesticide lindane, implicated in breast cancer, in 2000. Lindane has now been banned in the USA : on 2 August 2006, the US Environmental Protection Agency finally withdrew its registration for agricultural uses calling it 'one of the most toxic, persistent, bioaccumulative pesticides ever registered.'
7. Role of chemicals and pesticides: relevant scientific evidence:
 - The Prague Declaration on Endocrine Disruption
www.edenresearch.info/declaration.html
 - Rundle, A et al. The relationship between genetic damage from polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in breast tissue and breast cancer, *Carcinogenesis* 2000; 21: no 7, 1281-1289.
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