

Press release

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UK
Working
Group on the
Primary
Prevention of
Breast Cancer

Press Release:

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WOMEN EXPOSE THE SILENCE THAT KILLS

- Government and the Cancer Establishment are complicit in soaring rates of breast cancer says groundbreaking document

Government and the “cancer establishment” are complicit in soaring rates of Breast Cancer says a groundbreaking document released today by The UK Working Group on the Primary Prevention of Breast Cancer (1). Setting out the case for Primary Prevention the report accuses Government and the “cancer establishment” of failing to disclose the real facts on breast cancer – that man made environmental pollutants are major causes and that breast cancer is preventable.

The report “**Breast Cancer - an Environmental Disease: The Case for Primary Prevention**” (2), accuses Government and the cancer establishment of being fixated with screening and treatment while real prevention goes ignored, and demands an urgent shake-up of cancer policy

“Women have been sold the myth that breast cancer is normal and inevitable. It’s not,” says Diana Ward – primary author of “The Case”. “Breast Cancer is preventable, but Government and the cancer industry determinedly ignore the evidence. How much longer must we sit by and let this disease take more and more women?” says Ward.

Bringing together startling quotes from cancer specialists across Europe, the US and Canada, “The Case” argues that an official disregard for the reality is allowing breast cancer to steadily increase. The hard hitting review of 50 years of research gathers together incontrovertible evidence that many man-made chemicals and radiation - routinely released into our environment - are major causes of breast cancer.

“The Case” cites examples from Sweden, Denmark and the US, where pollution reduction programmes have cut levels of dangerous chemicals from the environment, and demands the UK Governments do the same.

“We need a massive rethink of priorities,” says Ward. “Government and the cancer establishment promote treatment and control and call this prevention. It’s a travesty of the meaning of the word. To prevent breast cancer women are told to change their diet, to exercise and to reduce weight. The truth is no lifestyle change can prevent breast cancer when we’re exposed to cancer causing and cancer promoting substances on a daily basis. Our bodies have become long-term storage centres for synthetic chemicals and the implications for “hormone dependent” diseases like breast cancer are huge.”

For the first time the new report presents the Big Picture of breast cancer in Britain. It describes a bleak “climate of political neglect of common sense approaches to cancer prevention”. Despite a mountain of evidence that many man-made agents are carcinogens and hormone disruptors:

- Industry - gets Government approval to routinely release carcinogens into our environment. Many widely used chemicals - now even found in our food - are known hormone disruptors.
- The Government – promotes “screening” and lifestyle change as “the best prevention”. Official Cancer Prevention Plans (3) ignore the evidence linking cancer to man-made carcinogens and hormone disruptors. They include no public warnings about the existence of these agents in everyday life and propose no strategies for reducing them.
- Medical science – focuses on treatment and control. For example, huge resources go into chasing the cancer gene when only 5-10% of breast cancer – far less than most women believe - is inherited. UK scientists are mostly silent on the issue of environmental pollutants.
- Cancer Charities – have no focus on primary prevention and are major fundraisers for research into treatment. They are part of a world-wide cancer industry which is remarkably silent on the role of carcinogens in the environment but confidently predicts a “cancer-forever” future in which rising cancer rates will be managed with lifelong monitoring and drug treatment.
- The public – are kept in the dark. Government, industry and science has known the truth for decades but the general public is largely unaware that breast cancer could be prevented by reducing exposure to cancer causing agents. People trust Government to make sure chemicals in the environment are safe. In fact, few industrial chemicals have ever been tested for their potential to promote cancer. Regulations are based solely on information provided by the manufacturers and data is kept secret – deemed commercially sensitive.
- The media – helps perpetuate popular cancer myths, such as breast cancer is largely inherited. Women’s magazines might carry breast cancer stories but they also run advertisements for cosmetics, toiletries and household goods – many of which contain the very toxins implicated in breast cancer.

All together, the new document – “The Case for Primary Prevention” – is a shocking indictment of cancer policy in the UK. The Working Group demands immediate action from Government, industry and the cancer establishment to – “urgently prioritise primary prevention and to reduce production, release and use of toxic substances”.

“For the first time the true facts of cancer have been exposed,” says Diana Ward. “Women everywhere will see how official policy denies them these facts and with them, their absolute right to health protection. We hope they will ask the Government: “Are you against breast cancer or for it!” By choosing to expose UK women to cancer causing pollutants the Government condones continued disease for countless women now and in future generations. It’s time to stop ignoring the facts and start eradicating the causes of breast cancer.”

For more information, contacts and full report in PDF format, telephone: Helen Lynn – 07957 408 303 or email info@nomorebreastcancer.org

Editors Notes:

1. The Working Group is drawn from a coalition of groups concerned with health, occupational and environmental issues. It includes women with or without experience of breast cancer from the cancer charity Breast Cancer UK, UNISON, the Women's Environmental Network and Women's Environmental Network Scotland.

2. The full report can be seen at: www.nomorebreastcancer.org (from 28th September 2005.) Publication of The Case was funded by The Scottish Breast Cancer Campaign, The European Public Health Alliance Environment Network, UNISON, and The Co-Operative Bank.

3. The National Cancer Plan 2000 and The Scottish Cancer Plan 2001 which aim to cut cancer deaths by 20% by 2010.

4. Today, the only "prevention" offered to high risk women includes surgical removal of ovaries, destruction of ovaries by drugs or radiation, mastectomy and drug treatment to reduce or block the hormone oestrogen. Some researchers favour life-long drugs for all women – though this remains highly controversial.

5. New EU chemicals legislation, called REACH, which will be voted on in November, was designed to significantly reduce human exposures to toxic chemicals. The UK government, along with governments of France, Germany and USA and the chemicals industry, has lobbied hard to weaken and delay the proposal. Current proposals look set to produce a document which will do nothing to reduce exposure to cancer causing chemicals and fail completely to protect human health and the environment. *Greens/EFA in the European Parliament Press Release "Pro-industry MEP's vote to cripple chemical laws"* <http://www.greens-efa.org/en/>

6. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has recently reviewed evidence on the health risks of widespread spraying of pesticides in the countryside. Their report (due 22nd September) is expected to demand new safety rules. [Crop spraying is health risk, say scientists](#)
The Sunday Times 11th September

Breast Cancer facts:

- Breast cancer was relatively rare until the mid 20th Century.
- It is the major cancer affecting women
- It is the most common cancer in the UK
- It kills more than one thousand women every month.
- Breast cancer cases are rising steadily. The chance of contracting the disease rose from 1 in 12 to 1 in 9 during the five years up to 2001.
- In any one year the disease affects almost a quarter of a million women in the UK. Fewer than half the cases can be attributed to official risk factors e.g. late onset of menopause, early onset of menarche, genetic predisposition, body weight, diet, late-age pregnancy.
- Girls are reaching puberty earlier. Toxicologists believe this could be due to chemicals changing the body's hormonal balance. Earlier puberty is linked to an increased risk of breast cancer later in life.

Chemical facts:

- More than 500 chemicals found in our environment are known to be weakly oestrogenic (ie. hormone disrupting). Many are used in detergents, pesticides and plastics.
- Children are born with a toxic burden right from the womb. New analysis of blood from the umbilical cords of new-born babies – released 8th September by WWF-UK and Greenpeace – found an array of chemicals, many of which are suspected of links to health problems ranging from birth defects and genital abnormalities to certain types of cancer. See “A Present for Life: hazardous chemicals in cord blood” at <http://www.panda.org/detox> and <http://www.greenpeace.org/toxics>
- More than 350 man-made contaminants have been found in human breast milk. Any chemicals stored in human body fat can potentially transfer to the newborn infant during breast feeding which makes human breast milk ‘the most chemically-contaminated food on the planet’ despite it being absolutely best for babies.
- Scientists have known about the connection between dietary contaminants and cancers for many years, yet 95% of dioxin (a known human carcinogen) which humans absorb enters our bodies through our food.
- Most fish sold in European supermarkets would be banned if fish had the same limits for dioxin as milk, eggs and meat.
- Risk assessment of chemical exposure is geared to what affects male adults – not children. This is despite the widely acknowledged fact that children are more vulnerable to toxic substances, and are affected by smaller concentrations.
- On 3rd September The Standing Committee of European Doctors adopted a policy stating: “It has now been scientifically demonstrated that there is indeed a link between chemical products and the appearance of diseases, such as cancers.” It also said “chemical pollution poses a serious threat to children and to the human race.” http://cpme.dyndns.org:591/adopted/CPME_AD_Brd_030905_100_EN.pdf