



Humboldt Community Breast Health Project

Supporting women facing breast or gynecologic cancer concerns

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Ask Dr. Julie

*Dr. Julie Ohnemus, HCBHP Founder & Medical Consultant.
Family Practitioner, Open Door Community Health Centers.*



Q. "I'm confused! When should I start having mammograms, and how often?"

A. When the controversy around when to have mammograms surged to the headlines last December I was swept up in the emotion of it all. As a woman who has had breast cancer, I felt anger and frustration. Why did I feel so much

emotion? My anger came from frustration that we still know so little about the biology of breast cancer and its risk factors. That being said, what can we learn from this controversy?

The U. S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) changed their recommendation from starting routine mammograms when a woman turns 40 to when she turns 50, and then to screen only every two years. It is true that there are pros and cons to mammography. The new recommendations do reduce medical costs, radiation exposure, anxiety over callbacks, and unnecessary biopsies – yet mammography is the only screening tool we have that has been shown to save lives.

It is important to remember, too, that not everyone agrees with the USPSTF recommendations. The American Cancer Society still recommends starting annual mammograms at age 40. Most insurance companies still pay for them. Women are left asking "When?" and "How often?"

Each of us must take this quandary and unravel it to fit our needs and values, evaluating our risk factors as well as we can. Women between 40 and 49 now have more responsibility for communicating with their physician about what will be right for them as individuals.

The Breast Health Project is about individualizing our approach to health care and re-framing fear through education. For me the controversy has become a call to re-emphasize patient centered care and to further our education on mammographic screening and modifiable vs. non-modifiable breast cancer risk factors. Call or visit us at the Breast Health Project and we will help you find the information you're looking for.

Whenever you are making medical decisions there are basic questions to think about. Do you like to participate in making medical decisions? What do the current studies tell us, how were they determined, and how closely do they apply to you? What will you do with the results of your test? What are

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Surprise Diagnosis



In 2007 Eddie Hannah had the sense that something was wrong. But she didn't associate her vague abdominal symptoms with a gynecologic cancer. "I wasn't bloated nor had my weight changed. What I noticed was some indigestion and bowel disturbances."

A CT scan revealed she had fallopian tube cancer. She had surgery followed by chemotherapy. "I was scared to death," she said. But what she found was that the chemo infusion was not a problem for her, it was what came afterward. "Losing my hair was really hard," she said. I shaved my head and didn't look at myself in a mirror for three or four weeks."

Eddie found out that the Breast Health Project serves women with gynecologic cancers when she read a story in the *Times Standard* in 2008. She made contact immediately. Although she had never been a person who joined women's groups, she began to attend the Gynecologic Cancer Support Group. At first her husband, Tom, drove her to the group and waited outside for her.

"It helped so much," she said of her experience at the Project. It is a wide group of women I wouldn't have met but for the group. We formed a very strong bond. We share hugs and lots of tears, information and jokes. I come home feeling great, happy and full of vim and vigor."

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**9th Annual
Benefit Raffle!
Drawing June 5th**



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Ask Dr. Julie, *from page 1*

your feelings about uncertainty, problems or risks? What can be done to reduce potential harm?

More medical testing is not necessarily better. There are risks with all screenings and possible follow-up treatments, so we need to do our best to lower potential harms and increase benefits.

HCBHP has always promoted breast self-awareness – as well as breast self exam for women who want to take the extra steps. It is only common sense to encourage a

Breast cancer is the #1 self-discovered cancer.

woman to become familiar with what is normal for her breasts, increasing the likelihood that she will be the first to discover a

change which could result in early detection of breast cancer.

We want to take breast self-awareness to another level. In addition to knowing your own body, know what your breasts look like on your mammogram. Are they dense? – if so, the newer digital mammogram is best for you, and an MRI should be considered for further evaluation of any abnormal finding. For all women, ask to sit down with the radiologist who is reading your mammogram. Make sure your mammogram was compared to your previous one in order to lower a potential false-positive reading. Ask your primary care provider to verify comparisons and reports of density. If you are still menstruating, have your mammogram during the beginning of your menses week.

Guidelines should not replace good clinical judgment and responsible self-care. Hippocrates said that it is the role of the medical practitioner to offer the most up-to-date recommendations and treatment, but also to ‘awaken’ the patient’s ‘innate healer’ so she can make the best individual choice for herself.

For a more clinical detailed review of the studies used by the USPSTF go to the newsletter page at www.hcbhp.org and click on Supplemental Article. • What questions would you like to see Dr. Julie answer in future columns? Email askdrjulie@hcbhp.org.



From the Executive Director

“This is a good place!” I heard a client exclaim as she was about to leave the Project recently. “And, because you brought yourself here – you’ve made it even better!” was the response I heard from the Client Services staff. That’s the core of what makes HCBHP so special: the circle of support expands as clients, volunteers and supporters come together to enable more women to benefit from early detection, information and support through their cancer-related journeys.

This Spring our work in the community was recognized by two local organizations. Soroptimists International of Eureka and Humboldt Bay honored Sharon Nelson, RN, Director of Client Services, with the Ruby Award for Women Helping Women. The League of Women Voters of Humboldt County honored HCBHP with its annual Civic Contribution Award. We thank our staff, Warmliners and other volunteers who work every day to support our clients.

During the next year our Board of Directors and staff will be looking into the future by undertaking a strategic planning process. We want to learn what works well at HCBHP and what we might improve. Special efforts will be made to hear from former clients and from healthcare providers. We want to learn how to continue to meet the needs of the community as best we can. If you’d like to make sure your voice is included, please contact me.

We have a lot of enthusiasm going into our 9th Annual Vacation Raffle. We hope you will join us by buying or selling raffle tickets, by tabling at community events, and by joining us at Arts Alive! for the drawing on June 5th.

Rose Gale-Zoellick, ED
rosegz@hcbhp.org

For the many ways you support our programs and our clients, we are forever grateful to

Volunteers • Community Members • Local Businesses • Medical Providers

Foundations & Major Corporate Support: Arcata Foundation, Baroni Designs, Cher-Ae Heights Casino, Coast Central Credit Union, Green Diamond Resource Co., HealthSPORT, Humboldt Area Foundation, Humboldt Redwood Co., Levin Foundation, Lima’s Professional Pharmacy, Mel & Grace McLean Foundation, Safeway Foundation, St. Joseph Health System, Trinidad Trust, Union Labor Health Foundation, Wildberries Marketplace.

To join our family of supporters or volunteers please call 825-8345 or visit our website www.hcbhp.org

“Warmline” Volunteers

This special group of volunteers are the warm voices you hear on the phone and the smiling faces you see when you come through our door. Many are cancer survivors. They are available to listen, answer questions, offer patient navigation, and provide information, healing support and hope to those experiencing the upheaval of a cancer concern or diagnosis. “These skilled and compassionate volunteers are the heart of HCBHP” says Client Services Director, Sharon Nelson.



Back row: Mie Matsumoto, Joy Hardin, Rinda McClure, Sheryl Sandige, Margot Julian, Chris Angell, Jean Wichelman, Vicky Dodge. Front row: Sandy Sweitzer, Linda Marlow, Bonnie Etz, Jane Crosbie. Not pictured: Harriet Watson.



Surprise Diagnosis, *from page 1*

About a year after treatment, Eddie’s cancer recurred. She left the area to see a specialist in gynecologic oncology at UCSF. Her second course of chemotherapy wasn’t as difficult as the first round except that at one point she got quite weak and required a blood transfusion. This time she did not lose her hair!

Eddie who is in her late 70’s is a third generation Humboldtter. She and her husband attended Eureka High School and Humboldt State. They have lived in their house for 53 years and have three children, grandchildren and a great grandchild. Eddie was a volunteer at American Cancer Society for 20 years and helped establish Evergreen Lodge, low-cost lodging for out-of-town cancer patients.

Setting goals that she wants to live to see and having a positive attitude have been important in Eddie’s healing “Each day is special to me,” she says. “I have always wanted to go to Italy and I have a trip planned in April with my three daughters.” She also credits prayer, working in her garden, the support of her friends and family (a granddaughter called her every day during treatment), maintaining peaceful and quiet surroundings and the love and support of her husband, Tom. “It felt like I had loving arms wrapped around me,” she said.

Eddie feels that in the sea of pink ribbons, gynecologic cancers do not get the attention they need. She would like to see more attention devoted to these cancers.

Community

There are many ways to support local women and their families who are facing the upheaval of breast or gynecologic cancer concerns. Here are a few of the recent fundraising events for HCBHP organized by community members.



L to R: Eureka High Girls Volleyball “Dig Pink,” Miller Farms Pink Wheelbarrow Raffle, Eureka High Girls Basketball “Pink Zone.”

Humboldt Community Breast Health Project

Mon-Fri 9:00 am-2:00 pm
After hours by appointment
987 8th Street
(corner 8th & J)
Arcata, CA 95521
(707) 825-8345
Fax: (707) 825-8384
Email: info@hcbhp.org
Web: www.hcbhp.org

We offer support, information and hope to help women become their own medical advocates and find their own path to healing. HCBHP does not advocate or endorse any specific course of treatment, whether medical, alternative or complementary.

Staff

Executive Director
Rose Gale-Zoellick, MSW, MPH
Client Services Team
Sharon Nelson, RN
Margot Julian, RN, Volunteer
Warmline Volunteers
Sue Mossman, Information Specialist, Volunteer
Office Manager
Barbara Sage
Volunteer Coordinators
Lindsey Fuller, VISTA
Vicky Dodge, Volunteer

Outreach Volunteers:
Native American Community
Bojan Ingle
Latino Community
Kathleen Zamboni, RN
Eleana Taylor

Newsletter
Bojan Ingle, Volunteer



*Help us go green and save money!
Sign up to receive this Newsletter via email.
newsletter@hcbhp.org*

Newsletters archived at www.hcbhp.org.

Calendar

May 6 • 5:00-6:00 p.m.
Face to Face at HCBHP
Hosted by Luther Cobb, MD, FACS,
Surgeon

June 5 • 7:30 p.m.
Raffle Drawing & Celebration
Join us in the Vance Hotel Lobby
at Arts Alive! in Old Town, Eureka

July 1 • 5:00-6:00 p.m.
Face to Face at HCBHP
Hosted by Uma Suryadevara, MD,
Medical Oncologist,
Eureka Internal Medicine

Sept 2 • 5:00-6:00 p.m.
Face to Face at HCBHP
Hosted by Deepak Stokes, MD, FACOG,
Gynecologist, Eureka OB/GYN Associates

SAVE THE DATE
September 25 • HCBHP Fall Concert

Support Groups

- **Breast Cancer Support Groups**
1st & 3rd Thursdays • 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.
Arcata, HCBHP office
Facilitator - Sharon Nelson, RN
- 2nd & 4th Wednesdays • 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Fortuna, 2280 Newburg Rd.
Facilitator - Pat Cowan, RN
- **Gynecologic Cancer Support Group**
2nd & 4th Tuesdays • 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.
Facilitator - Rebecca Zettler, RN
- **Advanced Disease Support Group**
Living with Stage 4 disease
1st & 3rd Mondays • 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Facilitator - Sharon Nelson, RN
- **Amazon Writers**
Healing through writing
2nd & 4th Wednesdays • 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
A peer led group

9th Annual
Vacation Benefit Raffle
Drawing Saturday, June 5th



**4 Destinations!
4 Winners!**

Lawai Beach Resort, Kauai
Parrsboro Harbor, Nova Scotia
Farmhouse B & B, Fortuna
Lost Whale B & B, Trinidad

Tickets \$10
3 for \$25 / 7 for \$50
15 for \$100 / 100 for \$500

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