



UIC SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, MC 922 · 2121 W. TAYLOR ST. · CHICAGO, IL 60612 · (312) 996-2297 · epstein@uic.edu

Cancer prevention through reduction of carcinogens in air, water, food, consumer products, and the workplace
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For Immediate Release
October 18, 1994

NATIONAL MAMMOSCAM DAY

Chicago – Commenting on tomorrow's National Mammography Day, **Dr. Samuel Epstein, Chairman of the Cancer Prevention Coalition (CPC)**, charged that "this is a recklessly misleading and self-interested promotional event, more aptly named **NATIONAL MAMMOSCAM DAY.**"

National Mammography Day, October 19, is the flagship of October's National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM). NBCAM was conceived and funded in 1984 by Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) and its U.S. subsidiary and spinoff Zeneca Pharmaceuticals. NBCAM is a multimillion-dollar deal with the cancer establishment, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and American Cancer Society (ACS) and its multiple corporate sponsors, and the American College of Radiology.

ICI is one of the largest manufacturers of petrochemical and organochlorines, and Zeneca is the sole manufacturer of Tamoxifen, the world's top selling cancer drug widely used for breast cancer. Zeneca/ICI's financial sponsorship gives them control over every leaflet, poster, publication, and commercial produced by NBCAM.

ICI supports the NBCAM blame-the-victim theory of cancer causation, which attributes escalating rates of breast (and other) cancers to heredity and faulty lifestyle. This theory diverts attention away from avoidable exposures to carcinogenic industrial contaminants of air, water, food, consumer products, and the workplace—the same products which ICI has manufactured for decades. Ignoring prevention of breast cancer, NBCAM promotes "early" detection by mammography.

There are a wide range of serious problems with mammography, particularly with pre-menopausal women:

- There is no evidence of the effectiveness or benefit of mammography in pre-menopausal women.

- By the time breast cancers can be detected by mammography, they are up to 8 years old. By then, some will have spread to local lymph nodes or to distant organs, especially in younger women.
- Missed cancers (false negatives) are commonplace among younger women, as their dense breast tissues limit penetration by x-rays.
- About 1 in every 4 "tumors" identified by mammography in pre-menopausal women turns out not to be cancer following biopsy (false positive). Apart from needless anxiety, repeated surgery can result in scarring, and delayed identification of early cancer that may subsequently develop.
- Regular mammography of younger women increases their cancer risks, particularly for women already at risk for familial reasons. Analysis of controlled trials over the last decade, has shown consistent increases in breast cancer mortality within a few years of commencing screening. This confirms evidence on the high sensitivity of the pre-menopausal breast, and on cumulative carcinogenic effects of radiation.
- Pre-menopausal women carrying the A-T gene, about 1.5 percent of women, are more radiation sensitive and at higher cancer risk from mammography. It has been estimated that up to 10,000 breast cancer cases each year are due to mammography of A-T carriers.
- Radiation, particularly from repeated pre-menopausal mammography, is likely to interact additively or synergistically with other avoidable causes of breast cancer, particularly estrogens (natural; medical; contaminants of meat from cattle feed additives; and estrogenic pesticides).
- Forceful compression of the breast during mammography, particularly in younger women, may cause the spread of small undetected cancers.

Pressured by this evidence on the ineffectiveness and risks of pre-menopausal mammography, NCI recently withdrew recommendations for such screening. This evidence is still ignored by NBCAM, supported by radiologists and giant mammography machine and film corporations, which has specifically targeted pre-menopausal women with high-pressured advertisements.

CPC urges the immediate phase-out of pre-menopausal mammography. Post-menopausal mammography should be restricted to major centers and exposure reduced to a minimum. Women should be provided with actual close measurements, rather than estimates. NCI and ACS should develop large-scale use of safe screening alternatives, including imaging techniques, and blood or urine tumor markers or immunologic tests.

Dr. Epstein urges that a medical alert should be sent to women subjected to the Breast Cancer Detection Demonstration Project high dose radiation experiments commencing in 1972. These experiments were conducted in spite of explicit prior warnings by a National Academy of Sciences committee, and also by former senior NCI staffer, and noted epidemiologist, Dr. John Bailar. He cautioned, "Such radiation in pre-menopausal women would be likely to cause more breast cancers than could be detected." Dr. Bailar now concludes, "This experiment could well account for an "immediate investigation of the cancer establishment's reckless conduct by the President's Committee on Human Radiation Experiments."

The Cancer Prevention Coalition (CPC) is a Chicago-based, national organization of leading independent experts on cancer prevention and public health, together with citizen activists, organized labor, public interest and women's cancer groups.

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Dr. John Bailar Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.