



# Touch of Courage

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## Beyond Pink TEAM

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### Inside this Issue

<b>1</b>	Prophylactic Mastectomy
<b>2</b>	Living Downstream
<b>3</b>	Beyond Pink TEAM Celebration of Accomplishments
<b>4</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Annual Pink Ribbon Run
<b>4</b>	Living Green
<b>5</b>	A Survivor's Story
<b>5</b>	Young Survivors Event
<b>5</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Touch of Courage Connection Newsletter
<b>5</b>	Save the Date
<b>6</b>	Save the Date!

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## PROPHYLACTIC MASTECTOMY

By Neil G. McMahon, M.D., F.A.C.S.

“Should I just get my breasts removed?”

This is not an uncommon question when sitting with a woman who has just been told that she is at high risk for breast cancer. The emotions and the shock that accompany this type of news bring a range of thoughts and fears. It is a question that has received a significant increase in medical press over the past couple of years and should be part of this discussion.

Several years ago, the Mayo Clinic published a paper (Jan 14, 1999 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.) on the use of Prophylactic Mastectomy (which is the surgical removal of one or both breasts) to reduce the incidence of primary or recurrent breast cancer in high risk women. This brought the discussion into the forefront as we understand a little more about the risk factors for breast cancer.

According to the 2009 statement on Prophylactic Mastectomy (PM) issued by the Society of Surgical Oncology, there are some potential indications for bilateral PM in patients without a Cancer diagnosis. These would include:

- A known mutation of BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 or other strongly predisposing breast cancer susceptibility genes as found by genetic testing.
- A family history of breast cancer in multiple first degree

relatives and/or multiple successive generations of family member with breast and/or ovarian cancer

- High risk histology such as atypical ductal or lobular hyperplasia or lobular carcinoma in situ on biopsy.

Some potential indications for PM of the contralateral (or other) breast for those who have had a previous or current diagnosis of breast cancer also exist and include the following:

- For risk reduction in patients at high risk for a contralateral breast cancer (as listed above)
- For patients in whom subsequent surveillance of the contralateral breast would be difficult due to the density, presence of diffuse microcalcifications, or other factors of the breast.
- For improved symmetry in patients undergoing mastectomy with reconstruction.

Prophylactic mastectomy is highly effective. Studies show it reduces the risk of developing breast cancer by 90 percent in moderate- and high-risk women. However, if you're at high risk of breast cancer and you decide against prophylactic mastectomy, you do have other options:

- **Surveillance.** The goal of surveillance is to detect cancer at its earliest stage. This would include both clinical breast exam as well as breast imaging studies such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), ultrasound and mammogram starting at a younger age than usual, sometimes as early as age 25 years.
- **Chemoprevention.** In this approach, you may prevent breast cancer by taking drugs that block the effects of estrogen, because estrogen can promote breast cancer development and growth. Tamoxifen and a similar drug — Raloxifene (Evista) — have been shown to reduce the risk of invasive breast cancer by approximately 50 percent. However, they come with serious risks, including blood clots and strokes, as well as side effects, such as hot flashes and vaginal dryness.
- **Lifestyle.** You may reduce your risk of breast cancer if you exercise regularly, limit alcohol use, maintain a healthy body weight, breast-feed for at least several months and avoid long-term postmenopausal hormone therapy.

Only women with a high risk of developing breast cancer should consider prophylactic mastectomy, and even then, the decision can be difficult. Researching your options and talking with your doctor and the staff at the Covenant Comprehensive Breast Center can give you the information you need to help decide whether this option is right for you.

**Living Downstream: An Ecologist’s Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment**  
 by Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D.  
 compiled by  
 Christine Carpenter  
 for this newsletter

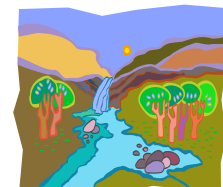
There was once a village along a river. The people who lived there were very kind. These residents, according to parable, began noticing increasing numbers of drowning people caught in the river’s swift current. And so they went to work devising ever more elaborate technologies to resuscitate them. So preoccupied were these heroic villagers with rescue and treatment that they never thought to look upstream to see who was pushing the victims in. This ongoing column will be a walk up that river.

Six clear trends have emerged in our understanding of the environment’s contribution to cancer. The first is a growing acknowledgment that cancer causation is complex. Cancer is now believed to result from a web of interwoven variables, any one of which can modify another. The old way of thinking was to imagine cancer risk factors as independent agents that could be boxed up into three neat categories: genes, lifestyle, and environment. Of the three, genes and lifestyle were thought to be the dominant players with only a small fraction of cancers attributable to the environment. That kind of simplistic accounting is increasingly seen as naïve. Cancer is now believed to result from a web of interwoven variables, any one of which can modify another. For example, breast feeding is protective against breast cancer. It

is considered a classic lifestyle factor: you can choose to nurse your baby or not, and if you do, you may lower your later risk of breast cancer. But evidence also suggests that exposure to certain organochlorine\* chemicals may impair a woman’s ability to lactate and breastfeed successfully. Thus, environmental contaminants can affect a lifestyle choice that, in turn, affects breast cancer risk. In short, cancer risk factors can interact with each other to exert direct and indirect effects.

So, how do we have hope? The mounting evidence that our environment is playing a bigger role in the story of cancer than previously supposed is good news because we can do something about it. Check out Breast Cancer Fund’s website and learn more about the environment and breast cancer and how to reduce your risk. [www.breastcancerfund.org](http://www.breastcancerfund.org)

\*\* The term organochlorine refers to a wide range of organic chemicals, which contain chlorine and sometimes several other elements, including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and industrial chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The compounds are characteristically very stable. This characteristic is widely recognized as being a problem in some uses such as pesticides and transformer oils, because the chemicals can be distributed in the environment where they persist long after their original use. They degrade slowly and being fat-soluble, accumulate in the food chain, eventually ending up in the fat of our bodies.



## Beyond Pink TEAM Celebration of Accomplishments by Dee Hughes

Each October the Beyond Pink TEAM holds a luncheon as an annual meeting to celebrate the accomplishments of this group of dedicated volunteers. This year our luncheon was at Covenant Medical Center. Lisa Walker and her co-workers in mammography did a wonderful job of organizing the event.

One of the good things we celebrated was **Val Turner**.

The Beyond Pink TEAM is so thankful for Val's expertise and giving spirit. Val has been helping out for the past few years with our website design and our frequent updates. Many of us on the Beyond Pink TEAM are "technically challenged," especially when it comes to website creation and design. We were thrilled when Val offered to help. Working at the University of Northern Iowa keeps Val very busy, but we are fortunate that she is willing to give of her free time to help us out.



Not only is Val computer savvy, but she has a cheerfulness and happy spirit that is hard to match. She is always willing to help when she can. She gives of herself often and with great enthusiasm. She is often helping us think of ways we can make our website better and provide more information. We are so proud to recognize the many volunteer contributions of Valerie Turner, our Member of the Year.

Another good thing was our speaker **Rob Inouye**. His wife, Terri, is a one year breast cancer survivor.



Rob was gracious enough to share his perspective on having his wife diagnosed with cancer. Rob is a wonderful speaker, intertwining his work experience as a Cedar Falls Fire Fighter, his faith, his humor, and love for his wife, family and friends into an inspirational message of hope and love. We are pleased he accepted the invitation to share his message with us. In addition, he and his fellow fire fighters have been selling "I Care Enough to Wear Pink" T-shirts and are donating the proceeds to the Beyond Pink TEAM.

The finale was the presentation of checks by a few of the donors that were able to attend the luncheon. Covenant mammography department's Fight Like a Girl Team donated \$1,590 from a bake sale and Fight Like a Girl clothing sales. Veridian Credit Union presented a check for \$600. Many more donations were received throughout the month, and the Beyond Pink TEAM is grateful for all of them.



As we celebrate the many things we have accomplished this past year, we also look to the future when we can celebrate the fact that breast cancer no longer exists.

## 4th Annual Pink Ribbon Run by Dee Hughes

Cedar Falls Community Main Street held the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Pink Ribbon Run on Saturday, October 2, 2010. More than 550 runners and walkers participated in the 5K on a cool but beautiful morning. Everyone started at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Main streets, headed down the Parkade, onto the trails towards Big Woods Lake, then returned to the Cedar Falls Library for the awards ceremony.

All of the proceeds from the race, more than \$25,000.00, were donated to the Beyond Pink Fund at the Community Foundation of Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and NE Iowa. This fund was established by the Beyond Pink TEAM in 2006, and is used to pay medical and/or living expenses for women in treatment for breast cancer. In 2010, the fund was able to help more than 50 women with expenses totally nearly \$25,000.00.

At the awards ceremony, **Kim Anderson** shared her story of being diagnosed with breast cancer and how the Beyond Pink Fund helped her. She had health



insurance, and was not worried about medical expenses when first diagnosed. Her nurse told her that she may be surprised as the bills start rolling in and to be sure and let her know if she needed assistance. As Kim got a couple of months into her treatment, bills for co-pays, deductibles, and uncovered expenses started coming in daily. She called her nurse who helped her apply for a Beyond Pink Fund grant. The request was approved and the fund sent a \$1,000 check to the hospital to help pay down her portion. She expressed how grateful she was, and how important the Pink Ribbon Run is to the fund.

The Beyond Pink TEAM is so honored to help women during stressful times. We would not be able to do that without all of the contributions we receive each year. The Pink Ribbon Run is our largest contributor, and we are so grateful for their support.

Thank you to all on the Pink Ribbon Run committee and Cedar Falls Community Main Street for sponsoring the run, and for selecting the Beyond Pink Fund as the recipient of your proceeds. A big thank you to the 550 runners and walkers who paid to participate and many gave additional donations to the fund as well. The Pink Ribbon Run wouldn't raise money without so many participants and what a fun event it is!

### Living Green By Cindy Harris

We keep hearing about “green” and “environmentally friendly”. What does this have to do with us? As new information is daily coming in, the bottom line is that chemicals and cancer are showing a distinct relationship.

We have all used plastic for everything for as long as we can probably remember. Did you know that plastic can take over 100 years to break down? One report I read said that every piece of plastic that has ever been thrown out is still in the landfill. EVERY piece!

As it breaks down, BPA, a chemical in plastic, is leached into the soil and eventually into our drinking water. It's in the food we grow for human consumption and food grown for the animals we eat. Plastic breaks down when it gets warm so it isn't safe for the microwave. When the container says “microwave safe” it means that it won't melt down to the point of disfiguring the container. It doesn't mean that it is environmentally safe for you to use in the microwave. Heating food in plastic lets all the chemicals in the plastic leach into your food. So when you warm up food in the microwave, use glass!

Recycling is the safest way to get rid of plastic. Use glass whenever it's available.

I believe we are going to see more glass containers on our grocery shelves in the near future as the demand for food safety grows.

## A Survivor's Story by Peggy Beard

My name is Peggy Beard and I am a breast cancer survivor!

It was March in the year 2000 and I was 57 years old. I was going for my annual mammogram. The gal called me in and right away saw an indentation in my right breast. It wasn't a lump you could feel but you could see it in the mirror. I went to a surgeon who did a needle biopsy and got the news that I had breast cancer the next day.

It all happened so quickly. I chose a mastectomy for fear the cancer could return but chose not to have implants. I suppose being married to the same man since I was 16 had something to do with my decision. On the outside I was joking about stuffing my bra, but on the inside I was scared to death.

After the surgery I had little pain but my incision would not heal. Apparently there wasn't enough skin to pull together. For seven long months I went to the doctor twice a week to have dead tissue removed. With my husband's help, we packed the incision with gauze and cleaned it with peroxide every day. I was close to having a skin graft when things took an upward turn. At last I was being fitted for a bra!

I have since survived a stroke and many other surgeries but the surgery for breast cancer was the most memorable. Even though many women do die with breast cancer each year, many women also survive.

I lost my husband and both parents in 2001 but still feel fortunate to have my kids, grandkids and many wonderful friends. I feel very lucky to be a strong woman who was unfortunate to have had breast cancer. I sometimes now regret not having implants, but with today's beautiful bras, and a gal like Jill Roberts at Clark and Associates, you can still feel pretty!

Please support breast cancer activities as progress is being made everyday in the fight for the cure.

### Young Survivors Event

The next Meet, Mingle and Learn for young women living with cancer will be Tuesday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Area Education Agency, 3712 Cedar Heights Drive in Cedar Falls. D.J. Corson will speak on *Creating Life Balance*.

DJ is a life coach, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Hawkeye Community College, a breast cancer survivor and a Beyond Pink TEAM and Young Cancer Survivor member.

The event is from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. but you may come and go as your schedule allows. Contact Emily Hodgin at 319-239-8118 or [emilyz@mchsi.com](mailto:emilyz@mchsi.com) if you'd like more information.

### 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

This issue of the Touch of Courage Connection newsletter is numbered Volume 15. As the planning committee wrote down "15" on the planning worksheet for the newsletter layout, it

caught us off guard. We didn't realize we were starting our fifteenth year of putting together quarterly newsletters.

The Beyond Pink TEAM writes, prints, and distributes 1,500 free newsletters quarterly. That means more than 850,000 newsletters have been put into circulation since the first newsletter was written in December 1995.

Thank you to the healthcare professionals that have written articles, survivors that have shared their stories, Beyond Pink TEAM members for articles, Dickey's Printing for affordable printing, and to Allen and Covenant Hospitals for assisting with delivery and postage.

### Save the Date!

**Jan 3 1:30 p.m.**  
*Touch of Courage*  
**Breast Cancer Support Group**  
2101 Kimball Ave., Waterloo  
Dawn Colbert 415-6430

**Jan 4 1:30 p.m.**  
**Care and Share Support Group**  
**Covenant Cancer Treatment Ctr.**  
200 E. Ridgeway, Waterloo

**Jan 18 4:30-7:00 p.m.**  
**Young Cancer Survivors Event**  
**AEA267**  
3712 Cedar Heights Dr., C.F.  
Emily Hodgins - 239-8118

**Feb 3 1:30 p.m.**  
**Splash of Color Event**  
Waterloo Public Library  
Cathy 319-493-8857

**Feb 7 1:30 p.m.**  
*Touch of Courage*  
Breast Cancer Support Group

### Save the Date! (cont.)

**Feb 8** 1:30 p.m.  
**Care and Share Ca Support Grp**

**Feb 15** 5:30-6:30 p.m.  
**Young Cancer Survivor Tea**  
Panera Bread in Cedar Falls  
Dawn Colbert - 415-6430

**Feb 14** 1:30-3:30 p.m.  
**Look Good, Feel Better**  
RSVP to American Cancer Society at 866-460-6550

**Feb 25-27**  
**Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer**  
Orlando, FL  
[www.C4YW.org](http://www.C4YW.org)

**Mar 7** 1:30 pm.  
**Touch of Courage**  
**Breast Cancer Support Group**

**Mar 8** 1:30 p.m.  
**Care and Share Ca Support Grp**

**Mar 15** 5:30-6:30 p.m.  
**Young Cancer Survivor Tea**

**Apr 4** 1:30 p.m.  
**Touch of Courage**  
**Breast Cancer Support Group**

**Apr 5** 1:30 p.m.  
**Care and Share Ca Support Grp**

**Apr 11** 1:30-3:30 p.m.  
**Look Good, Feel Better**  
RSVP to American Cancer Society at 866-460-6550

**Apr 19** 4:30-7:00 p.m.  
**Young Cancer Survivors Event**  
3712 Cedar Heights Drive  
Cedar Falls



### Resources

Information, support, counseling, and educational materials are available from the following:

**Beyond Pink TEAM** is a local breast cancer organization providing a variety of services. Our website lists services we provide as well as other services available in the Cedar Valley. [www.cedarvalleybreastcancer.org](http://www.cedarvalleybreastcancer.org)

**Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-Action** is a local advocacy group taking action against breast cancer. [www.iowabreastcancer.org](http://www.iowabreastcancer.org)

**Living Beyond Breast Cancer** includes a helpline, newsletter and information. Survivors Helpline: 888-753-5222 [www.LBBC.org](http://www.LBBC.org)

**Young Survival Coalition** connects with other young women diagnosed with breast cancer. [www.youngsurvival.org](http://www.youngsurvival.org)

**Cancer Care** is a national nonprofit organization offering counseling, support, financial assistance and education to individuals with cancer and their families. [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

**Iowa Cancer Consortium** offers cancer information and links to resources in Iowa. [www.canceriowa.org](http://www.canceriowa.org)

**American Cancer Society** offers cancer information and services. [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

**National Breast Cancer Coalition** The NBCC's mission is to eradicate breast cancer by focusing the government, research institutions and consumer advocates on breast cancer. It encourages advocacy for action and change. [www.stopbreastcancer.org](http://www.stopbreastcancer.org)

**M.D. Anderson Cancer Center**, University of Texas offers patient and cancer information. [www.mdanderson.org](http://www.mdanderson.org)

**Susan G. Komen for the Cure** website offers cancer and social networking information and a newsletter on their website. [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

**Iowa Breast Resource Guide** is available on the Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-action website. [www.iowabreastcancer.org](http://www.iowabreastcancer.org)

Connect with us...

A donation for Touch of Courage is both needed and appreciated. All donations go to support the services of the Cedar Valley Cancer Committee and are tax deductible.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ amount of donation

General Donation  Newsletter Donation  NBCC Scholarship Fund

Make checks payable to the Cedar Valley Cancer Committee and send to 1607 Heath Street, Waterloo, IA 50703