



## TAYLOR TIDBITS

# BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

As most are aware, October is breast cancer awareness month. Whereas much has been done in defeating breast cancer, we still have a way to go. Breast cancer still remains a leading cause of mortality in Western society and is a leading cause of morbidity.

### GAINS MADE

Overall, the breast cancer rate has dropped. A combination of early detection and research has started dropping our rate over the last several years. A study, published in 2002 suggested a correlation between post-menopausal hormone replacement therapy and increased rates of estrogen sensitive breast cancer. Following the publication of this study, physicians began to limit the use of post-menopausal estrogen and we have seen a significant drop in the rates of breast cancer development over the last 6 to 7 years.

Early detection remains the key to surviving breast cancer. Widespread use of mammography has resulted in a significant increase in detection of early stage breast cancer. Many of these lesions are found before they have the biologic ability to spread affecting essentially a surgical cure. Mammography and the understanding of the biology of the disease have also helped those of us in breast surgery to identify the precursor lesions in breast cancer. This potentially allows us the opportunity to intervene before cancer can develop.

American women now report much higher rates of breast self-exams and it is widely held that a woman that finds her own cancer will be cured. This implies of course that the lady is engaged in monthly self-breast exams. Increased awareness remains the sentinel event in the prevention of breast cancer.

### DISTURBING TRENDS

Despite the gains being made with the overall rate of breast cancer, it appears to be affecting a much younger population at an increasing rate. Teenage breast cancer was at one time almost a reportable disease, now rarely can you find a breast surgeon who has not seen several cases of cancer in young adults. Whereas there has been many causes suggested, nothing has been confirmed by research. It does serve to remind us all that we need to be diligent in following up all concerns that women have regarding their breast, regardless of their age. Unfortunately it now appears that no one is too young for breast cancer.

Breast cancer also continues to be a problem in our more rural areas. Lack of nearby resources and lack of self-exam plagues our less urban areas contributing to a higher stage at diagnosis and subsequently a lower chance at survival for our rural neighbors. Continued education and constant promotion from rural health care providers remain our best response to combat this problem.

### THE RESPONSE

Breast self-exam and routine mammography remain the mainstay of early detection and subsequently cure of breast cancer. This being said, the treatment of breast cancer has taken on a whole new

dimension in the last several years. Through screening and genetic testing, we are now able to identify those who may get breast cancer, sometimes decades before, and intervene thus preventing the disease. The treatment from breast cancer prevention can involve close observation, surgery and medications. If you are one of those people identified as a high risk individual, it may be life saving.

We the staff of Ocmulgee Surgical Associates are dedicated to bring state of art, surgical services to a deserving community and hospital. We are pleased to announce the formation of our breast care clinic specializing in breast cancer treatment and follow up (in conjunction with the Dan Maddox Cancer Treatment Center), High risk management, as well as diagnosis of breast disorders. No problem is too small for our clinic. If you are experiencing any breast problems at all, male or female, do not hesitate to call for an appointment today. We will help with any referrals needed.

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