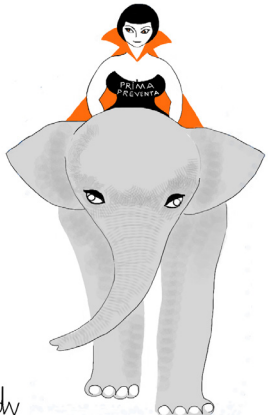
BREAST CANCER & THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL LINKS

All The Things You Should Know About Breast Cancer Risks But Don't.



As breast cancer incidence rises decade on decade and as our environment (home, workplace and wider environment) becomes more and more polluted (often beyond our personal control), there is a breast cancer 'narrative' that get very little mainstream attention.

- Somewhere between 50% and 70% of breast cancer cases cannot be explained by 'lifestyle' causes
- Breast cancer rates worldwide are rising at an alarming rate and in the UK, incidence has risen by 64% since the 1970s
- There are 216 chemicals known to be linked to breast cancer. There are at least 1000 chemicals which are known or suspected of interfering with our hormones
- A considerable body of scientific evidence overwhelmingly connects a wide range of environmental and occupational risks to breast cancer (eg carcinogens and hormone disruptors) present in everyday life.

We want you to know about this narrative. We want to share a bigger story which doesn't catch the 'pink limelight'. These lifelong (and pre-birth), low-level exposure risks must not be airbrushed out of the story. They are not incompatible with the current dominant lifestyle focus to public education (diet, smoking, weight) – indeed they are an additional impact on them, just as the search for better diagnostics and treatment should not be mutually exclusive with government, industry and breast cancer charities all taking action on the profound health impacts of the 'chemical cocktail' we are all exposed to, in a myriad of ways, every single day.

Many now argue that these risks are a missing key to understanding ever increasing rates of breast cancer (indeed other cancers too). We have brought together a wide range of experts and activists to give you a quick summary of what's going on, why we need to call it out and who we need to put the pressure on to get primary prevention on the agenda. Primary prevention means stopping the disease before it starts. (Prevention is sometimes wrongly confused with early detection).

The history of the original pink ribbon

We use the original Charlotte Haley 'salmon / peach' colour to acknowledge Haley's original campaign intention – prevention. As it was when she began in 1991, so it is now- a fraction of funds spent on breast cancer are dedicated to primary prevention and addressing wider environmental and occupational risks.

Breast Cancer Month: We Need A Name Change

Gudrun Kemper
Breast Cancer Action Germany

Gudrun Kemper, Breast Cancer Action Germany:

"As many millions of women are already hyperaware of breast cancer, there is no more need for any pink breast cancer awareness. What is now needed is a fuller more complete picture. It's time to change the name of the month to Breast Cancer Prevention Month."

Some Statistics:

- Breast cancer is the second most common cancer in the world.
- It is by far, the most frequent cancer among women with an estimated 1.67 million new cancer cases diagnosed in 2012 (25% of all cancers).
- Breast cancer ranks as the fifth cause of death from cancer overall (522,000 deaths) and while it is the most frequent cause of cancer death in women in less developed regions (324,000 deaths, 14.3% of total), it is now the second cause of cancer death in more developed regions (198,000 deaths, 15.4%) after lung cancer.

Reference World Health Organisation 2012

http://globocan.iarc.fr/old/FactSheets/cancers/breast-new.asp

You Have A RIGHT TO KNOW That Breast Cancer Is An Environmental And Occupational Disease And Therefore Preventable. The Evidence Is Out There But Who Is Telling You About It?

Lisette van Vliet, Ph.D.
Senior Policy Advisor
Health and Environment Alliance, Belgium

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is a leading platform of health and environment public interest groups working to strengthen European environment policies to improve people's health. We work to create better representation of expertise and evidence from the health community in EU and international decision making processes and this includes the issue of environmental and occupational links to breast cancer. We have seen breast cancer gain more and more attention, as civil society groups and scientists alike, forge a way forward in sharing the scientific evidence that links the disease to these risk factors which are insufficiently addressed in the policy arena.

There is a significant body of evidence now about which we should all have The Right to Know. Evidence from distinguished sources such as

The President' Cancer Panel (USA)

The Collegium Ramazzini (EU)

WHO Asturias Declaration

In the Asturias declaration, the World Health Organisation put environmental and occupational factors in first place in the primary prevention of cancer. "Decreasing, and eventually eliminating the exposure to environmental and occupational carcinogens is the most effective way to prevent a number of cancers," Lisette van Vliet, Senior Policy Advisor on Chemicals & Health, Health and Environment Alliance, who took part in the meeting, said: "The Pledge represents an important milestone in developing international consensus on the primary prevention of cancer - that is, stopping cancer before it starts by eliminating exposures to harmful chemicals at work and from the environment. This recognition by medical and scientific experts and the WHO makes our call for specific EU and national targets - to reduce people's exposure to cancer-related chemicals by half by 2020 - even more urgent."

http://www.frompinktoprevention.org/resources/scientific-evidence/ (Asturias 2011)

Find out more: Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL) http://www.env-health.org/

The Tendency Is To Look At The Cancer Rather Than The Cancer Causing Substances

Professor Andrew Watterson
Stirling University

When there is talk about breast cancer prevention, it's about lifestyle factors and what the individual can do. Known and suspected environmental and occupational risk factors are not addressed.

Assessments have said that 50% of breast cancer we can't explain, there is recent research done which indicates that something like 85% of breast cancers are due to long term exposures to environmental cancer causing substances, that would include diet and other things. There are areas we know can take effective action on.

There needs to be interventions now, along with treating cancer and preventing exposures to carcinogens is critical. There are 216 chemicals known to be linked to breast cancer. We can prevent certain things, we can remove carcinogens, which is what the WHO approach is, act upstream and stop people falling ill if you can and of course treat them when necessary.

The WHO estimates that up to 19% of cancers are due to toxic environmental exposures but when you look at what the bigger charities do on prevention, many of those messages are lost.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour (2012) 'Un-pinking Cancer'

What Major Breast Cancer Charities Are Not Telling Women

Diana Ward
From Pink to Prevention, Australia

Breast cancer charities are highly regarded as organisations dedicated to providing advocacy, support and information for women affected by the disease. Their work also informs the wider public about this major cancer in women. It is therefore disturbing to discover that many leading breast cancer charities fail to inform women about ALL risk factors for the disease while maintaining their focus almost exclusively on lifestyle risk factors {alcohol, smoking, exercise). Lifestyle factors are important but what about the impact of toxic chemicals on the health of every single one of us?

Given that we know (i) there is a vast amount of existing research linking breast cancer incidence to lifelong (womb to grave) exposures to environmental and occupational chemicals e.g. carcinogens and endocrine disruptors (ii) that breast cancer is a hormonally driven disease (iii)that genetic factors account for less than 10% of cases (iv) that only a small proportion of the remaining 90% can be attributed to lifestyle factors leaving the majority of cases without explanation why is it that so many breast cancer charities, industry and government chooses to ignore the scientific evidence for environmental and occupational risk factors? Why the deafening silence in breast cancer awareness campaigns about the role of chemical, environmental and occupational exposures for breast cancer?

Their selective and narrow focus on lifestyle risk factors is a barrier to official and public recognition of environmental and occupational risk factors implicated in both promotion and onset of breast cancer as well to the advancement of scientifically informed strategies for saving lives through primary prevention – stopping the disease before it starts - rather than by post disease pharmaceutical intervention favoured by industry.

Women could not be blamed for losing faith in the integrity of any breast cancer advocacy organisation which deprives them of their Right To Know about ALL the risk factors for breast cancer and the potential of such knowledge for saving women's lives.

A Polluted Environment Means Polluted People

It is shocking to find out that of the approximately 70,000 chemicals in regular commercial use in Europe today only about 10% have proper health and safety information. This is due to historic lack of proper regulation, and political will and corporate lack of responsibility. Over 1000 of these chemicals are known or suspected of interfering with our hormones; we know that anything which can interfere with our hormones particularly oestrogen can increase our risk of breast cancer.

Chemicals known as Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) are of particular concern as they can be found in products we use, work with or come into contact with every day including our food and drinks. Cosmetics and toiletries, furnishings, plastics, food and food packaging can all contain EDCs. These toxic chemicals can accumulate in our bodies and in our fat which includes our breast tissue.

Studies have shown up to 300 different manmade chemicals in human body tissues and secretions including human breast milk while 137-232 toxic chemicals have been found in the umbilical cord blood from new-borns. 132 of these are reported to cause cancer in humans/animals, 110 are toxic to brain or nervous system, 133 cause developmental and repro problems in mammals (humans included).

Toxic chemicals linked to breast and other cancers or those linked to other illnesses and diseases have no place in our bodies. It's not just endocrine disruptors but a host of other breast carcinogens including physical risk factors such as shift work and ionising radiation which need to be urgently addressed. Given what we now know about the links between these carcinogens and toxic chemicals, we need to be asking the question why environmental and occupational risk factors for breast cancer are not included and actioned in every cancer plan and strategy.

http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/78069/E93670.pdf

Helen Lynn
Alliance for Cancer Prevention, UK

What Are EDCS, Where Are They, Why Do You Need To Know About Them And What's The Cost Of The Harm They Do?

The endocrine system is a collection of glands that produce hormones. These hormones regulate metabolism, growth and development, sexual function, reproduction, and much more, connecting a complex system that includes ovaries, testes, thyroid, adrenal glands, pancreas and the brain. Endocrine – or hormone – disrupting chemicals (EDCs) interfere with this complex system, whether by affecting amounts produced, of where they are directed to go. These hormone disrupting chemicals are everywhere – from birth to death. We cannot escape them – at home, at work, in the wider environment. They are in plastics, cosmetics and pesticides; across household items from furniture and carpets to white goods in our kitchen; they are in food cans.

The EU has demanded action on EDCs but the chemical lobby has other plans. It has very effectively blocked action on hormone disrupting chemicals.

We know breast cancer is a hormonally driven disease. We also know that EDCs mimic the female sex hormone oestrogen. There are 1000 chemicals which are known or suspected of interfering with our hormones according to the WHO's State of the science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals in 2012 and we know there are 216 chemicals known to be linked to breast cancer. So why aren't governments acting on this? Why aren't those charged with the *prevention* of breast cancer not taking action on EDCS as well as 'lifestyle' causes?

The information above is drawn from the work of Stephane Horel.

Stephane Horel
Journalist and film-maker, France

Find out more: French journalist and film-maker Stephane Horel has spent many years tracking and investigating the relationship between corporate lobbying across the EU and how conflict of interest negatively impacts on environmental and public health policies. Her films Le Grande Invasion and Endocrination together with her extensive research and writing dig deep into these relationships.

The Workplace And Breast Cancer Risk

Dr. Jim Brophy and
Dr. Margaret Keith
University of Windsor Ontario

Our many years of scientific research experience have brought us to one clear, stark conclusion: women who are exposed to carcinogens and endocrine disrupting chemicals at work have a greater risk for developing breast cancer. Workplace exposures can take many forms but we know that workers' health acts as a barometer for the wellbeing of the whole of society. Toxic chemicals used and produced in the workplace find their way into our general environment where they pose a threat to people of all ages.

In 2012 we were a part of an international, multidisciplinary team of investigators that collected the lifetime histories of over 2100 women living in southwestern Ontario, Canada. Our study found that women employed in agriculture, metal-working, restaurant/ casino, automotive plastics and food canning bore an elevated breast cancer risk. It was especially noteworthy that premenopausal women in both automotive plastics and food canning had an almost five-fold risk. In partnership with The National Network on Environments and Women's Health (NNEWH) we collaborated with trade unions and other women's health advocates demanding that these workplaces be investigated and changed. *This is not just a problem for Canada; it affects people worldwide. We join with all those calling for prevention with the belief that no woman should be forced to accept that her occupation should put her at risk of developing cancer.*

Find out more about breast cancer and occupation

http://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2015/01/07/14/55/breast-cancer-and-occupation

So Why Are Some Of Us Sceptical About 'Pink'?

Patricia Kearns
Pink Ribbons, Inc. Scriptwriter;
Research And Network Advisor,
Breast Cancer Action Quebec

We don't in any way want to undermine those who gain hope, strength and a sense of community from pink ribbon fundraising, but our film Pink Ribbons, Inc. does ask critical questions about the industry and the pink ribbon brand. There has been a growing criticism of the trend for business to 'cash in' on the disease. "Pink-washing" means, on the one hand selling products to raise money for the disease while on the other, using ingredients in that product which linked to causing the disease. Breast cancer is a good cause for big corporations as women make 80% of the buying decisions.

And at Breast Cancer Action Quebec, we can't help but be more than a little skeptical. Check out our FAQs and find out the real story of the pink ribbon. Read more to get information on some of the little pink lies that seem to abound during this time of the year. Be informed! Ask critical questions about where the money goes. After so many years there still seems to be very little money devoted to finding the root causes of this disease (less than 5% goes to prevention). Click here to learn more about some of the myths and misconceptions that are out there.

As October approaches we are awash with all things pink – lots of organisations, singing from the same hymn sheet. If only women would adopt a sensible lifestyle, then the incidence of breast cancer would decrease dramatically and all would be well in the pink, fluffy world.

It cannot be stressed enough how important a healthy lifestyle is. But how many clean living, vegetarian, abstemious, keep fit fanatics still get breast cancer? Here at Challenge Breast Cancer Scotland HQ we know quite a few!

So whilst we support the 'pink' army in its quest to produce a healthier population, we do get so very, very tired of the continuous lecture on how women are to blame for their own breast cancer. And we object strongly to the healthy lifestyle message being continually, predominantly and almost exclusively linked to breast cancer. Can it not stand alone, proud and strong, for what it is?

Of all the conferences/ workshops/lectures we have attended over the years, there is seldom any mention of environmental or occupational links to breast cancer. When challenged we are told "there's not enough evidence" or "we can't separate out all of the environmental influences".

So to the powers that be and the pink community in general, we say, take heed of this, our 'pink October' message. Stop passing the buck to women and start taking responsibility for our polluted environment and the chemical cocktails we are subjected to on a daily basis. We'll do our bit by taking regular exercise, eating our fruit and vegetables and encouraging the next generation to breast feed but you have to meet us half way. Please?

Find out more Challenge Breast Cancer Scotland

Moira Adams
Challenge Breast Cancer Scotland

Yes We Can! We Can Get From 'Pink' To 'Prevention'

Gayle Sulik, Ph.D.
Founder
Breast Cancer Consortium USA

Over the last 30 years the breast cancer movement has worked to make breast cancer a national priority, raise awareness and funds, galvanize social support, and impact the direction of research. Women have been at the forefront of information sharing, activism, and patient empowerment. And a lot of good has come from these efforts.

Yet I would argue, and have argued, that there is an urgent need to change the conversation on breast cancer, to get real about this disease, and to acknowledge that there is an ocean of misinformation, trivialization, and commercialization that is undermining the movement, and the cause itself. What's more, pink ribbon hype diverts money and attention away from endeavors and ideas that have a greater chance of making a real difference to the diagnosed, those at risk, and the epidemic at large.

I'm heartened that so many tenacious activists and growing numbers of journalists, health care practitioners, and the public are raising their voices to demand transparency and accountability of all stakeholders in the breast cancer industry. Though divergent in the problems they tackle and the methods they use, a critical stance is necessary if we are to turn this thing around.

We need new thinking about breast cancer. We need to move beyond the pink ribbon version of awareness. We need truth. Evidence. Action.

Breast Cancer Consortium USA www.breastcancerconsortium.net

What Can I Do? Read On...!

Get Informed and Take Action

Here are some actions you can take – as a citizen, as a consumer and as a worker and most likely all three!

For background information as to why you need to take action check out our Questions and Answers page, the scientific evidence and the latest facts.

This is all about stopping breast cancer before it starts, it's time to make it happen.

- Citizen
- Consumer
- Worker
- Pinkwashing
- Recommended Reading

http://www.frompinktoprevention.org/what-you-can-do/

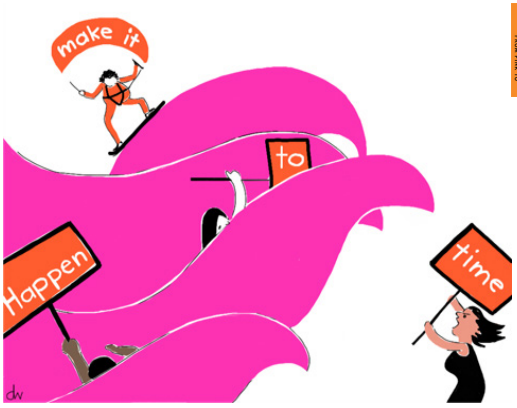
And finally – sign our PETITION & spread the word

We at *From Pink to Prevention* know that evidence links breast cancer to environmental and occupational exposures. If this also concerns you, join us in removing the Pink Ribbon 'Blindfold' and asking this BIG QUESTION of the breast cancer charities, government and industry:

WHY do they persist in refusing to acknowledge the role of environmental and occupational toxicants by ignoring decades of evidence up to the present day on the link between our lifelong (womb to grave) exposures to toxics and the escalating incidence of breast cancer?

WHY do breast cancer charities continue to focus solely on 'lifestyle' risk factors such as diet and exercise, while ignoring the potential 60% of breast cancer cases for which they have no explanation. What about the role of chemical, environmental and occupational exposures in this?

https://www.change.org/p/breast-cancer-charities-remove-the-pink-ribbon-blindfold-and-ask-the-big-question-3



FROM PINK TO PREVENTION
STOPPING BREAST CANCER BEFORE IT STARTS

From Pink to Prevention
www.frompinktoprevention.org
October 2016

Cartoons by Diana Ward
Frame vector designed by Freepik
Designed by HC Lin, Tipping Point North South