

Bladder Cancer Awareness

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In memory of Susan Evans "I have now reached end-stage cancer...the one thing that concerns me most about bladder cancer is its extremely low profile. I hope the group will field more suggestions and ideas on education and awareness. There's no one else who's going to do it." Susan Evans

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What do you mean, "rare tumor?" The European Union saw 120,000 new cases of bladder cancer in 2004. The US now boasts 600,000 bladder cancer survivors. 400,000 of these people live with the (life-long) risk of recurrence. Worldwide, 350,000 new cases are diagnosed every year. Statistics show that the prevalence of bladder cancer is rising, especially in women.

The huge number of people living with bladder cancer has been ignored long enough. Changes are on the horizon; professionals and patients alike need to be aware of how we can help. The goal is to educate about the facts regarding bladder cancer (see also: about bladder cancer, risk factors and types, on WebCafe)

WebCafe's flyers can easily be printed and used for this purpose.

A simple way to get the word out about this information and support site: printable WebCafe's Flyer (pdf file).

Information about our basic concerns can be downloaded and printed out about: WebCafe's flyer on bladder cancer awareness (pdf file).

Bladder Cancer - the Fogotten Cancer

The facts

Wendy Sheridan (1999-2007)

Surprisingly, the number of Americans living with bladder cancer surpasses those with lung cancer. Lung cancer survivors number 350,679 while bladder cancer now afflicts over half a million Americans. [2002 NCI Seer statistics]. Worldwide, more than 350,000 men and women are diagnosed with bladder cancer each year. Bladder cancer is the fourth most commonly diagnosed cancer in men and the eighth in women, making it one of the most prevalent, yet least discussed - cancers in the world. The most common warning signs are blood in the urine, pain and urgency upon urination.

Bladder cancer has been considered a disease of mostly elderly men and occurs in men 3 times more often than in women. However, statistics show that the number of women in industrialized nations being diagnosed with bladder cancer is rising. In the US, prevalence is approaching that of cervical and ovarian cancer: women with bladder cancer: 131,649, ovarian cancer: 169,875, cervical cancer: 184,371. More women die from bladder cancer each year than from cervical cancer.

These numbers tell us that bladder cancer is not just a man's disease, and not just for the elderly.

Preventable

Smoking causes half of all bladder cancer cases. Quitting smoking has been shown to decrease the risk, though not as much as if one never smoked. Job related exposure to chemicals and environmental factors account for many more cases of bladder cancer. Although screening tools are now becoming available, much more research is needed before they can be used in practice. For those with high-risk jobs such as firemen, truck drivers, dye workers, printers, hairdressers and dozens of other professions that expose people to harmful chemicals, screening might prove to be worth the investment.

Women are all too often misdiagnosed and are twice as likely as men to die from the disease. Blood in the urine - bladder cancer's most common symptom - is often mistaken, ignored or not taken seriously enough by gynecologists and women themselves. Other negative prognosis factors are a higher proportion of rare cell types found and the amount of women diagnosed with the more serious, invasive bladder cancer at later stages. Studies are suggesting that women may actually be more susceptible to the bladder carcinogens in cigarette smoke and perhaps other risk factors as well.

Although African Americans are half as likely as whites to develop bladder cancer, it is twice as fatal for this population.

Lack of awareness about bladder cancer's risk factors and warning signs is costing lives. Approximately 80% of cases at the time of diagnosis are non-invasive, or 'superficial' tumors. These are not usually life-threatening, but difficult and costly to treat because they often come back. Life-long follow up is needed. Guidelines released in 1999 showed very little change in treatment approach or disease-free survival after more than 30 years. Among the obstacles facing researchers are the small number of clinical trials conducted for bladder cancer, lack of funding for larger trials with larger enrollment, and the need for better co-ordination on the national and international levels.

The remaining 20% of people with bladder cancer are diagnosed with invasive tumors. Bladder removal is still considered the best option for a cure, although treatment guidelines for this type of bladder cancer have yet to be agreed upon. There is much progress being made but more studies in the field are desperately needed. Funding for bladder cancer is among the lowest, while the cost of treating the disease is among the highest of all cancers due to its good prognosis and the need for life-long follow up.

Bladder Cancer and Lack of Awareness (1999-2007) Edit from original article by Wendy Sheridan

There are many sources for cancer awareness in general. Jennifer Tresh is an activist, author and founder of the Elena Tresh Foundation for children with terminal illness. Learn the story of her daughter's battle, living with cancer.