

Lobby Day | April 2009

## Talking Points: The EARLY Act

The Breast Cancer Education and Awareness Requires Learning Young Act of 2009, or EARLY Act (H.R. 1740), was introduced in the U.S. House by Representatives Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Sue Myrick (R-NC), Donna Christensen (D-V.I.) and Melissa Bean (D-IL), and is expected to be introduced shortly in the Senate by Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN). The EARLY Act will:

- Initiate an evidence-based public education campaign about breast cancer in women under age 40 — with an emphasis on women at higher risk due to their race, ethnicity or genetic heritage.
- Educate health care professionals about the risk factors, opportunities for genetic counseling and testing, and unique challenges that face young women diagnosed with breast cancer.
- Provide grants to organizations that provide credible health information directed to young women diagnosed with breast cancer.

The EARLY Act authorizes \$9 million per year for FY2010 through FY2014 (\$45 million total) to carry out the awareness and education campaigns and to provide grants to organizations that provide breast health information to young women.

### Young Women and Breast Cancer

- While it is rare, young women under age 40 can and do develop breast cancer. In the U.S. about 5 percent of all breast cancer occurs in women under age 40:
  - Nearly 11,000 women in the U.S. under age 40 are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, and more than 1,200 will die.
  - There are more than 250,000 women living in the U.S. today who were age 40 or under when they were diagnosed with breast cancer.
  - The five-year relative survival rate in the U.S. is slightly lower among women diagnosed with breast cancer before age 40 (82 percent) compared to women diagnosed at ages 40 and older (89 percent).
- Diagnosing breast cancer in young women can be more difficult because their breast tissue is often more dense than the breast tissue of older women. By the time a lump can be felt in a young woman, it is often large enough and advanced enough to lower her chances of survival. In addition, the cancer may be more aggressive and less responsive to hormone therapies.
- Because it is rare for a young woman to get the disease, they are often told to wait and watch a lump. Women should tell their doctors if you notice a change in either breast, and think about getting a second opinion if not satisfied with the doctor's advice.
- Young women with breast cancer face issues that may differ from women who are post-menopausal. These issues may include the possibility of early menopause, fertility questions, pregnancy after diagnosis, overall higher stage of breast cancer at diagnosis and a higher mortality rate.

- Because the incidence rate of breast cancer in younger women is lower than the rate in older women, young women are often underrepresented in research studies.

For more information, see “Young Women & Breast Cancer,” a fact sheet produced by Susan G. Komen for the Cure and available online at [http://ww5.komen.org/uploadedfiles/Content\\_Binaries/806-352a.pdf](http://ww5.komen.org/uploadedfiles/Content_Binaries/806-352a.pdf).

### **Komen and Young Women**

There are benefits to starting evidence-based, age-appropriate breast health education. By starting young, when women are still developing their lifelong habits, educating them about the benefits of healthy living and breast self-awareness will lead to a lifetime of empowerment. And they may be willing to adopt healthy lifestyles including exercise and nutrition.

- Komen has a long history of working with young women who are affected by breast cancer and provides educational materials and resources for young women diagnosed with breast cancer.
- For example, Komen on the Go®, a mobile community education and outreach tour made possible by the Val Skinner Foundation, will be visiting nearly 40 universities and historically black colleges this year to educate young women about breast cancer.
- Komen’s Young Women’s National Advisory Council was established to help the organization address gaps in breast health and breast cancer research, education, treatment and screening pertaining to specific population groups. Advisory council members, who are selected on the basis of nominations and come from all over the nation, help Komen find new and exciting ways to engage with younger women, providing them with breast health and breast cancer information that is relevant to them and where they are in their lives.
- In addition, Komen has joined with the Young Survival Coalition and Living Beyond Breast Cancer to cosponsor the Annual Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer — the only international educational conference dedicated to the critical issues of young women affected by breast cancer, their supporters, caregivers and the medical communities that serve them.

### **Komen Recommendations for Greater Breast Self-Awareness**

Komen strongly encourages every woman to take charge of her life. Susan G. Komen for the Cure® recommends that you:

- Talk to your family to learn about your family health history
- Talk to your doctor about your personal risk of breast cancer
- Ask your doctor which screening tests are right for you if you are at a higher risk
- Have a mammogram every year starting at age 40 if you are at average risk
- Have a clinical breast exam at least every 3 years starting at 20, and every year starting at 40
- Know how your breasts look and feel and report changes to your health care provider right away
- Make healthy lifestyle choices that may reduce your risk of breast cancer

### **Responding to FAQs and Concerns**

*We are currently developing a statement to respond to some criticisms of the bill that have been reported in the media. We will distribute the statement once it is approved and finalized.*