



**Essex County Cancer Coalition
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 15, 2006 4:00-6:00 pm
Montclair Public Library—50 South Fullerton Avenue**

Attendees: Beverly Brevard, Lee Dolan, Lois Greene, Careen Griffiths, Aretha Hill-Forte, Susan Levin, Brian Luke, Catherine Marcial, Rhonda McCathem, Ana Natale-Pereira, Punam Parikh, Terri Pietsch, Sreedar Raja, Diane Siegel, Azadeh Tasslimi, Marielos Vega, Stan Weiss and Mary Wharton-Sampson.

Introductions

Participants introduced themselves to the Coalition and stated which organization(s) they represent.

Approval of March Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Coalition's March 16, 2006 meeting were distributed, reviewed, and unanimously approved with no changes.

Presentation: "ExCel Breast Cancer Prevention Trial", Ms. Lee Dolan, Department of Medicine, New Jersey Medical School

The ExCel Breast Cancer Prevention Trial aims to study of the effectiveness of the drug exemestane (Brand Name: Aromasin) in preventing breast cancer. ExCel is a Phase III, double-blind, randomized, multinational study taking place in the U.S., Canada, and Spain. Study investigators aim to enroll a total of 4,500 women.

The ExCel study came out from past clinical trial studies, namely through the Women's Health Initiative and STAR (Study of Tamoxifen & Raloxifene Trial). Both drugs were found effective as there was a 50% reduction in the incidence of invasive breast cancer. Subjects were healthy, postmenopausal women who were at high risk of developing breast cancer. However, both drugs increased a woman's chance of developing blood clots and women taking Tamoxifen were more likely to develop uterine cancer.

The ExCel study was conceived because it is thought that exemestane may be effective in preventing breast cancer, but with fewer side effects compared to Tamoxifen and Raloxifene. Exemestane reduces the production of estrogen and is FDA-approved for use in *breast cancer patients* to prevent recurrence. Most common side effects of exemestane are low-grade nausea and hot flashes.

The ExCel trial is open to women 35 years and older, who are post-menopausal and who are at increased risk for breast cancer. Women participating in the ExCel trial will take a pill with their morning meal everyday for 5 years, after which they will be followed-up. They will fill out questionnaires periodically.

Dr. Norman Lasser from the Department of Medicine at New Jersey Medical School is the Principal Investigator of the ExCel study at NJMS, which is the only site in New Jersey where the ExCel trial is being conducted. So far, 40 women have been enrolled at this site, and NJMS will easily meet its target enrollment of 50 women. Recruitment is being conducted through churches and senior housing centers.

A video about the ExCel trial (targeted towards potential subjects) was shown. Lee also distributed brochures and posters about the study (materials are not currently available in Spanish). More information about the ExCel trial can be found at: www.excelstudy.com.

Agency Updates/Announcements

American Cancer Society—Beverly Brevard

Beverly has taken on a new position at the American Cancer Society, Director of Patient Navigation. The ACS is conducting the “Call-Back Initiative”, which aims to follow-up with individuals who call its toll-free number to make sure that they have necessary educational resources. The ACS is looking for volunteers to call back these individuals. There is a training session for the Call Back Initiative on June 23rd at St. Michael’s Medical Center for 4 hours. Healthcare professionals are not required to attend the entire session. Individuals are allowed to volunteer from home during the evening or on weekends. Ana suggested that Beverly try to recruit student volunteers; Lois suggested asking senior citizens or retired healthcare professionals to volunteer. Beverly is looking for a minimum commitment of 1 hour per week. The training will be offered again in the near future.

St. Michael’s “In the Pink” Program—Lois Greene & Aretha Hill-Forte

Lois shared that IMPACT is holding a training program for the community, based on the train-the-trainer model to educate the community about clinical trials. The training is scheduled for June 27th, 1-4 pm at Seton Hall University. Training materials are available in English and Spanish.

Aretha stated that in 2006, the “In the Pink” program has detected 5 breast cancers, 2 cervical cancers, and 1 prostate cancer. They are also working with the SAVE program to raise awareness about lung cancer (especially in women).

Stan Weiss

Stan informed the Coalition of a method by which providers can establish loosely written agreements with the CEED program, so that patients diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer (who are uninsured or underinsured) are eligible for treatment.

James Wall, Chief Operating Officer, UH Cancer Center

The UH Cancer Center is scheduled to open at the end of August. Currently, staff are being recruited and hired in order to expand research, clinical, and outreach services. The Cancer Center has 9 floors and approximately 220,000 square feet of space.

There will be a Resource Center which will house four computer workstations with Internet access, so patients and their families may browse health-related websites and will also have

printed materials on various cancer-related issues available as well. Staff will be available in the Resource Center to assist visitors with health information needs.

The Cancer Center will also have a Community Outreach Office, which will be led by a Director of Community Outreach, with an annual budget of \$435,000. Currently, a job description is being written for this position. Ana suggested that the Cancer Center look to the community to see what qualifications and background the ideal candidate should have. Others suggested that the Cancer Center recruit someone and develop a job description based on their background and qualifications. The focus of the Cancer Center's community outreach will primarily be the Greater Newark Area.

Ana Natale-Pereira, Department of Medicine, New Jersey Medical School

Ana described the grant that she was awarded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS). This is a four-year demonstration project involving 6 centers nationally, which have different target populations. The main goal of the study is to determine whether patient navigators and community health workers (CHWs) positively affect the cancer screening behaviors and experiences with the medical system of Medicare beneficiaries.

The focus at University Hospital/New Jersey Medical School is Latino (mainly Puerto Rican) Medicare beneficiaries. In total, 1380 individuals need to be recruited (100 people with cancer, 1280 cancer-free) who will then be randomized into control (does not receive services of CHW and patient navigator) and treatment groups (receives services of CHW and patient navigator). The study involves the use of community health workers and hospital-based patient navigators. Recruitment will commence September 1, 2006.

The results of this study will be extremely important, as the success of the patient navigator and community health worker model will affect whether Medicare establishes patient navigation as a standard of care and reimburses its beneficiaries for services provided by the navigator and community health worker.

Committee Updates

Marielos presented on findings from the survey conducted by the Education/Outreach committee on Coalition members to assess what activities are being conducted and what the needs are of Coalition members. It seems that services need to be expanded into different languages.

Speaker: Susan Levin, President, Lung Cancer Circle of Hope

Susan spoke about her non-profit organization, the Lung Cancer Circle of Hope (www.lungcancercircleofhope.org), whose mission is to eradicate myths surrounding lung cancer and create knowledge and awareness of lung cancer to the general public. The organization is also committed to working closely with public policy makers, to increase research funding and help to shape policy that impacts lung cancer.

Lung Cancer Circle of Hope is conducting educational symposiums entitled "Dispelling the Myths—Dispensing the Facts" throughout the state. Venues include Morristown Hospital (November 15th), Princeton University Medical Center (November 6th), and St. Michael's Medical Center (November 3rd).

Susan reminded everyone that smoking is the #1 cause of lung cancer, but there are also other causes, which deserve the attention of the healthcare and policy-making communities. For example, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Susan stated that many people do not know that they are exposed to radon in their homes until they sell their home, as it is a requirement for the home inspection. Therefore, people who do not sell their homes are most likely unaware of whether they are exposed to significant quantities of radon. Mary and Ana stated that the cities of Montclair, West Orange, and Orange have had radon problems in the past.

Another goal of the organization is to advocate for more resources for those affected by lung cancer. For example, there are only two lung cancer support groups in NJ.

New Jersey is the only state in the U.S. that has established November as Lung Cancer Awareness Month. The Lung Cancer Circle of Hope is planning activities for November 2006 that the ECCC may want to be involved with. The Lung Cancer Circle of Hope is open to working with other organizations to address the issue of lung cancer.

Stan suggested contacting the State Cancer Registry for data on the number of lung cancer cases in non-smokers and number of lung cancer deaths in the communities that have had significant radon exposure in the past.

Next Coalition Meeting:

Thursday, September 28, 2006 @ 4-6pm

Location: The Priory Restaurant, 233 West Market Street, Newark, NJ 07107