Breast and Cervical Cancer in the United States

- Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women.
- Finding breast and cervical cancer at an early stage improves the opportunity for effective treatment and survival.
- Women who lack health insurance coverage often do not get screened for these cancers.
- Many deaths from breast and cervical cancers could be avoided if cancer screening rates increased among women at risk.

Congress passed the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP) in 1991 to help reduce breast and cervical cancer deaths among medically underserved women in the United States. This program, administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), brings lifesaving breast and cervical cancer screening, information, and follow-up services to women at highest risk -- especially poor, low-income, racial and ethnic minority women.

Now available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, and 13 American Indian/Alaska Native organizations, the program has provided more than 7.5 million screening tests to 3.1 million women, detecting 33,000 breast cancers, 2,000 cervical cancers and 88,000 pre-cancerous cervical lesions.

Trends in Federal Funding For NBCCEDP

Inadequate program funding means only 1 in 5 eligible women aged 50 to 64 years receives screening through NBCCEDP.

For FY2008, the program received less money than the $225 million Congress authorized.

Flat funding has effectively reduced the program’s purchasing power by about 10% since 2005.

Call to Action

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network℠ recognizes the enormous impact NBCCEDP has in saving the lives of low-income, uninsured and underinsured women diagnosed with breast and cervical cancer. The proven success of this early detection program demands that we fully fund it so that we can serve all eligible women to be sure they are screened and treated when their cancer is in its earliest stages.
Breast and Cervical Cancer in Massachusetts

- In 2008, breast and cervical cancer will account for 14% of new cancer cases in Massachusetts.
- In 2008, it is estimated that 4,480 women in Massachusetts will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 200 will be diagnosed with cervical cancer.
- Only 70% of Massachusetts women aged 40-64 had a mammogram in the past year. Among the uninsured, only 61% of women were screened.
- Pap test use was lower among women in Massachusetts aged 18-64 without health insurance compared to women with health insurance.


Massachusetts’ Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program: Women’s Health Network

The Breast and Cervical Cancer Detection Program, Women’s Health Network, provides free pap tests and mammograms to women 50-64 who are uninsured, underinsured, and have income below the 250% federal poverty line.

- From 2002-2006, almost 34,000 Massachusetts women were screened by the program.
- Women’s Health Network helps reduce disparities by providing life saving screening test to the women at greatest risk. Over 40% of the women served are racial/ethnic minorities.
- From 2002-2006, the program detected 162 breast cancers and 379 cervical cancers or cancer precursor lesions. Thanks to the passage of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act (BCCPTA) in 2000 and Massachusetts electing to participate in this optional program, these women now have access to treatment coverage under Medicaid after being diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer through the NBCCEDP.

Over 116,000 uninsured women aged 18-64 with a Federal Poverty Level (FPL) less than 250% and 38,800 women aged 40-64 with a FPL less than 250% reside in Massachusetts. Due to insufficient funding, Massachusetts’ Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program is only able to screen a fraction of all eligible Massachusetts women.


Call to Action

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) believes that all eligible women in Massachusetts should have access to the program. Additional state and federal dollars are required to expand the capacity of the screening program so that no woman is denied these life-saving services.

5. Data Source: October 2007 submission of NBCCEDP Minimum Data Elements (MDE)