

RACHEL'S FRIENDS

BREAST CANCER COALITION

2006 Goals for Breast Cancer Activists

No More Breast Cancer

We look forward to the day when Rachel's Friends can shut down because scientists found out how to **prevent** breast cancer by stopping it before it starts and also found a cure for people living with breast cancer.

More research on environmental causes of breast cancer, with drug companies as supporters, not leaders

Nancy Evans, a health consultant to the Breast Cancer Fund, said, "Only \$1 out of every \$9 of breast cancer research money goes to studying environmental links to the disease." Since only 5-10% of breast cancer is caused by genetics, we need to find out what's causing the other 90%.

In Marcia Angell's book, *The Truth About Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What to Do About It*, Angell, a former *New England Journal of Medicine*

editor, calls for an independent mechanism within the National Institutes of Health for testing prescription drugs without involving drug companies.



Promote implementation of the Precautionary Principle

The Precautionary Principle of public health means acting to reduce our exposure to known and suspected carcinogens **now** based on evidence indicating that they are harmful to our health.

Current laws do not protect us from toxic chemicals that threaten our health and environment. The Precautionary Principle supports a "better safe than sorry"

approach to public health policies by encouraging decisions that seek to *prevent harm before it happens*.

Grow stronger and wiser as activists

Every day, women and men living with breast cancer ask for what they need from their physicians, government leaders, and breast cancer organizations. Just 30 years ago, women awoke from biopsies wondering if they still had breasts. Many surgeons who found cancer during a biopsy chose to spare the patient from making her own treatment decision. Then Rose Kushner (*Beyond Slash, Burn, and Poison*) and other women demanded the right to decide for themselves.

Rachel's Friends continues our work to make these goals a reality. Join us!

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EPA proposes testing pesticides on humans

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing that pesticide companies be allowed to test their products on humans, including children and pregnant women.

This proposal would allow:

- testing of “abused or neglected” children without permission from parents or guardians
- “ethically deficient” studies by the EPA if the agency deemed it necessary to fulfill its mission. The EPA has no criteria for making this determination.
- EPA acceptance of foreign industry studies that are often performed in countries



with minimal or no ethical standards for testing, as long as the tests are not done directly for the EPA

- pesticide testing on prison inmates

The proposal is backed by chemical companies and opposed by the Organic Consumers Union, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, among others.

The proposed rule would control procedures for testers who submit their data to the EPA. The EPA must publish the final rule by January 31, 2006.

www.organicconsumers.org/epa6.cfm

What can I do?

“I never thought that buying a car had anything to do with breast cancer. Knowing that auto exhaust contains mammary carcinogens puts fuel efficiency in a whole new light.”



Rachel's Friends Breast Cancer Coalition is a non-profit all-volunteer advocacy group dedicated to eliminating environmental toxics that are linked to breast cancer. We honor Rachel Carson, a biologist and writer who died of breast cancer. Her 1962 book *Silent Spring* exposed the dangers of pesticides.

We work to **prevent breast cancer** by exposing environmental causes. We educate policymakers and the public about the **impact of pesticides and other environmental toxics** on the rising incidence of breast cancer.

We advocate for an environment free of carcinogens and for increased funding for **research on environmental causes of breast cancer**.

We support the **Precautionary Principle** — acting to reduce our exposure to known and suspected carcinogens **now** based on evidence indicating that they are harmful to our health.

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Breast Cancer and the Environment

by Julia G. Brody, Ph.D. Reprinted with permission from Silent Spring Institute

The statistics on world-wide increases in breast cancer risk are grim. In the US, a woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer moved up in 2004 to 1 in 7 from 1 in 8. The risk is 1 in 6 when *in situ* diagnoses are taken into account.

Rapidly increasing risk in the developing world, where mammography is rare, tells us we are seeing more disease, not just more diagnosis. The increase cannot be due to inherited genes, because inherited genes can't change over just a couple of generations. Studies that show increased risk for women who move from low-incidence regions to high-incidence countries, like the US, point to something about the way we live in industrial societies.

So far, scientists have explained less than half of breast cancer risk with all the identified risk factors. That means that additional, unknown causes must be at work. If we can find out why incidence is increasing, we can learn to prevent future disease.

Where should we look for clues to prevention? Laboratory studies point to three mechanisms that could link various chemicals to breast cancer:

- Chemical carcinogens can damage DNA.
- Tumor promoters can make cells grow.
- Developmental toxics can leave the mammary gland more vulnerable to carcinogens.

“ . . . we are seeing more disease, not just more diagnosis.”

The US National Toxicology Program has identified 42 chemicals as breast carcinogens in laboratory animals; about 100 have been identified internationally. Many are common, such as carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in grilled and smoked food, tobacco smoke, and air pollution from auto exhaust, power plants, and other fossil fuel-burning processes. Other mammary carcinogens are in some furniture finishes, dyes, and solvents.

After a cancer begins, chemicals called tumor promoters may stimulate growth. Natural estrogens and pharmaceutical estrogens (hormone re-

placement therapy) affect breast cancer risk. Estrogen mimics are part of a larger group of chemicals known as endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs) because they affect hormones. EDCs are in some plastics, pesticides, detergents, and cosmetics.

Scientists at the US Environmental Protection Agency discovered that when they gave laboratory animals the pesticide atrazine during certain weeks of pregnancy, the offspring never developed fully mature mammary glands, leaving daughters more vulnerable throughout life to carcinogenesis.

Linking strong laboratory evidence to epidemiologic studies in women remains a challenge, because it's so hard to measure exposure to a complex mixture of pollutants over a lifetime. But laboratory studies can help us target precautionary public health policies to reduce exposure, and they point us to urgent areas for breast cancer studies.

For a list of mammary carcinogens and EDCs, visit http://library.silentspring.org/publications/pdfs/brody_rudel_EHP03.pdf.

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**Saturday, May 13, 2006
Behind the Pink Ribbon:
Breast Cancer,
Corporations, and You**

7:30-9:30 pm

Portland State University

Smith Memorial Center Student Union, Rooms 327/8

Barbara Brenner is coming to Portland to speak on the politics of breast cancer, advocating for research on the causes of breast cancer, and holding polluters accountable.

Barbara is the executive director of Breast Cancer Action in San Francisco. Read about her at

www.bcaction.org/Pages/LearnAboutUs/AbouttheStaff.html