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Death Rate Higher for Male Breast Cancer than Testicular and Prostate Cancers Combined

- Male Breast Cancer Survivor Partners with Men's Health Network to Dare Men to be Aware of Breast Cancer -

Washington, D.C., October 11, 2006 – Breast cancer is not just a woman's disease. Inspired by one man's story of survival, Men's Health Network, the leading online men's health authority, has launched an educational campaign daring men to be aware of their risk for breast cancer. Launched in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, *Dare to be Aware: Men and Breast Cancer* helps break through the often fatal barriers that can prevent men from getting early diagnosis and treatment.

Although breast cancer is less common in men than in women, it is currently more deadly; 27 percent of men with breast cancer will die from the disease in 2006, compared to 19 percent of women. Breast cancer also has a higher death rate than more common male cancers such as prostate cancer (9 percent) and testicular cancer (4 percent). Lack of awareness, embarrassment and social stigma contribute to later diagnosis of male breast cancer, and cancer found at a later stage may be less likely to be effectively treated.

"Most men don't consider breast cancer a possibility, so they may easily mistake suspicious symptoms such as visible lumps for other problems, or ignore them entirely until it's too late," said Jean Bonhomme, M.D., M.P.H, Board of Directors, Men's Health Network. "We're urging men to acknowledge their risk for the disease and take action when they see the signs – it could save their lives."

An estimated 1,720 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, according to the American Cancer Society. While more men die from the disease, ironically breast cancer may be more detectable in men due to a smaller amount of breast tissue; symptoms are often visible and include a painless lump, redness, swelling or dimpling in the breast area; nipple discharge or changes in its shape or appearance; and swollen lymph nodes or glands near the underarm.

"You might think that working at a cancer center, I'd recognize my own symptoms right away, but I assumed the annoying bump on my chest was a bug bite, or maybe an infection," said Marshall Anderson, male breast cancer survivor, West Texas rancher, and medical technologist at Texas Cancer Center, Abilene, Texas. "As a man, I was shocked and outraged when my doctor told me it was really inflammatory breast cancer. I want other men to learn from my experience so that they know there's no shame in having this disease, and that it's treatable and beatable."

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As with female breast cancer, when screening reveals the presence of male breast cancer, there are many treatment options available, such as surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. New research is showing that oral chemotherapy is even more effective at shrinking tumors and delaying tumor growth in advanced breast cancer in combination with new targeted and anti-angiogenic cancer therapies. Oral chemotherapy, in particular, can help some patients continue to lead a productive life while undergoing treatment.

“A male breast cancer diagnosis does not have to be a death sentence – and the sooner we detect it, the better we can treat it,” said Anton Melnyk, M.D., Texas Cancer Center, U.S. Oncologists, in Abilene, Texas. “If you see or feel a lump, or have a family history of the disease, don’t let denial or embarrassment stand in your way of survival – get screened.”

With the spotlight focusing primarily on women during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it is important not to forget that men get breast cancer too – and those who may have it are less likely to have a community of support and customized resources that help them cope with their diagnosis and treatment.

To address this need, as part of the *Dare to Be Aware* program, the Men’s Health Network has developed an online portal to educate men about breast cancer screening, early diagnosis and treatment options. The Web site, www.menshealthnetwork.org, houses resources tailored especially for men, including a risk assessment tool, downloadable instructions for a breast self-exam, a fact sheet on male breast cancer, and a testimonial from Anderson about his personal story surviving breast cancer.

About Men’s Health Network

Men’s Health Network (MHN) is a non-profit educational organization comprised of physicians, researchers, public health workers, and individuals. MHN is committed to improving the health and wellness of men, boys, and their families through education campaigns, screenings, data collection, surveys, toll-free hotlines, and work with health care providers. With a network of chapters, affiliates, and health partners, MHN has a presence in every state. MHN conducts screenings in the workplace and at public venues, sponsors conferences, and promotes awareness periods such as National Men’s Health Week. MHN partners with both private and public entities to achieve these goals.

About Dare to Be Aware

The Men’s Health Network *Dare to Be Aware: Men and Breast Cancer* program is an extension of the National Women’s Health Resource Center (NWHRC) *Dare to Be Aware* educational initiative. Established in 2005, *Dare to Be Aware* empowers Americans to take control, face their fears and fight against cancers they may not recognize or acknowledge as a risk. The initiative’s current programs also address colorectal cancer in women and include *Dare to Be Aware: Women and Colorectal Cancer* and *African American Women: Dare to Be Aware*. These programs are made possible by Roche, www.Roche.com.

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