

October 12, 2009

Media Statement

WA RESEARCHERS CALL FOR HELP IN BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

During October, Breast Cancer Awareness month, West Australian researchers are urging women to step forward to become part of two pioneering research projects searching for vital clues to prevent the disease.

Based at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), the International Breast Cancer Intervention Study (IBIS II) hopes to uncover whether a drug widely used to treat breast cancer - anastrozole - can also help women avoid the tragic disease.

The team is calling for 6000 women from across the globe with a family history of breast cancer to take part in the trial.

Cancer Council Professor of Clinical Research and Director of Clinical Trials Michael Millward said previous research on anastrozole as a treatment for early stage breast cancer revealed it may prevent up to 80 per cent of hormone-receptor positive tumours in women at high risk of breast cancer.

"Over the next five years, this trial will investigate the potential of the drug as a preventative measure for women with increased risk of breast cancer, which could help save thousands of lives," he said.

"West Australian women have proven themselves to be very generous when it comes to donating their time for medical research and so far we've recruited a large percent of the number needed for the trial.

"We're asking all post-menopausal women aged between 40 and 70 with a family history of breast cancer to contact us at WAIMR in Nedlands to join the trial which involves taking a daily tablet for five years – randomly selected placebo or medication – as well as regular health checks with us."

For more information or to sign-up for the IBIS II trial, please call 1800 640 709.

In another research project, now reaching out to potential volunteers, The Breast Cancer, Environment and Employment Study (BCEES) hopes to find out whether our workplaces may contribute to the disease.

The Study will ask 3000 WA women to provide details of their work history and lifestyle as well as an optional DNA sample, so the team can look for triggers and links within a person's surrounds and employment habits which may cause or protect against breast cancer.

Leading the investigations, WAIMR's Professor Lin Fritschi said the team would assess factors like shiftwork, pesticides and other chemicals in or near the workplace, pregnancy and fertility, and physical activity in women between 18 and 80 years of age, across a variety of working sectors.

"We will compare information from women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer against those who have not had the disease, searching for any common patterns like toxins in the environment and lifestyle factors that may be risk factors for the cancer."

Professor Fritschi said women approached to take part will be contacted by mail, after being chosen at random from the Western Australian Electoral Roll, and those with a history of breast cancer would be confidentially selected from the WA Cancer Registry.

"If you have received a letter from us, we really encourage you to take part in something that has the potential to help many families avoid the devastation of losing a loved-one to breast cancer," she said.

The BCEES is being funded by The University of Western Australia and the National Health and Medical Research Council.

-ENDS-

Media contact: Sarah Hayward, WAIMR Media Consultant, 0401 141 483, sarah@capturemedia.com.au