

# **Response to *Breast Cancer and the Environment: Prioritizing Prevention*, a report of the Interagency Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Coordinating Committee**

March, 2013

Women deserve answers to what causes breast cancer. And while NBCC supports the recommendations of *Breast Cancer and the Environment: Prioritizing Prevention* calling for an increase in federal collaborative research on breast cancer prevention, involving advocates, we are disappointed that in 2013 we don't have more than another report. This report follows the 2011 release of the IOM report *Breast Cancer and the Environment: A Life Course Approach*, the 2010 President's Cancer Panel report, *Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk: What We Can Do Now*, and the 2009 report from the National Conversation on Public Health and Chemical Exposures, *Addressing Public Health and Chemical Exposures*, among others.

During the 1990s, NBCC conceived of the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act as a result of two Environmental Policy Summits, and pushed for enactment of the bill beginning in 1999. The bill called for the creation of a national research strategy and a program to competitively fund collaborations of researchers and community groups to actually answer and not just write about the issues. That was not the bill that Congress passed. Instead we were given another committee to write another report.

The report from the 21-member Interagency Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Coordinating Committee (IBCERCC), issued after two years of meetings, called on the federal government to prioritize prevention research to get answers for women on breast cancer prevention. The committee recommended the research be collaborative, reaching across different scientific disciplines and different federal agencies, involving stakeholders. The report, and its recommendations, now rests on the desk of the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

NBCC has already been taking action to prioritize prevention and to create collaborative projects involving scientists and advocates to get women the answers they deserve. In 2010, NBCC brought new urgency to understanding prevention by setting a deadline for knowing how to end breast cancer by January 1, 2020. To do this, NBCC advocates believe that sufficient resources must be focused on prevention of the disease and prevention of deadly metastasis.

During 2013, more than 300,000 women will be diagnosed with in situ and invasive breast cancer, and more than 40,000 men and women will die from the disease in the US alone. To change course, and to understand what causes breast cancer and breast cancer metastasis by 2020, NBCC began with the launch of the Artemis Project®, a series of collaborations among patient advocates and researchers from diverse perspectives to develop strategies, research plans and timelines for answering key breast cancer questions around prevention. Patient advocates are there to make sure efforts are always focused on obtaining the answers that matter.

The first of our projects, the Artemis Project® for a Preventive Breast Cancer Vaccine, was launched in 2011, bringing together a group of advocates and scientists to take a strategic, systematic yet broad approach to the development of a breast cancer preventive vaccine within five years. Close to 40 project team members gather each year to assess progress and to re-adjust plans. NBCC has awarded two grants as part of this project, allowing investigators to take a broad approach to identifying the best targets for a preventive vaccine.

A second Artemis Project® will kick off in June of 2013 to look at prevention of metastasis with a focus on tumor dormancy. As with the Artemis Project® for a Preventive Breast Cancer Vaccine, NBCC's goal is to bring together investigators with diverse perspectives to brainstorm and develop innovative strategies for accelerating progress, and to include advocates in the process from the beginning.

NBCC believes that these pilot projects can serve as a model for all collaborative breast cancer research projects, and that women will get the answers they deserve, sooner rather than later.

