



EMARGOED TO 15 October 2008

## Breast Cancer Prevention - Peace of Mind

The three key organisations which focus on women's breast cancer prevention and early detection have today released a joint position statement on breast awareness.

The Cancer Society of New Zealand, the New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation (NZBCF) and the National Screening Unit have been in consultation, gathering the latest 'best practice' information and tailoring it for New Zealand woman.

Historically the organisations have differed in some of their advice to women, creating lack of clarity about what women should do, so this joint statement is a tremendous accomplishment. It will provide enormous peace of mind for women to know that wherever they get their advice, it will be the same, and it is based on thorough international research and evidence.

Dr Jan Pearson, Health Promotion Manager of the Cancer Society says "it is known that when women have good awareness of themselves physically and mentally they notice normal cyclical changes and things that seem to be different than normal. Being self aware and seeking help early to check out changes that don't seem to fit the normal pattern, can make a positive difference.

Today's women are encouraged to be 'breast aware' rather than practice routine breast self examination as there is no evidence to show that doing regular monthly breast self examination reduces the chance of dying from breast cancer.

Dr Belinda Scott, Chair of the Medical Committee of The New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation stated "The Foundation is very pleased to be part of this combined initiative of three organisations creating a statement for women's health. This united position should help women in looking after their own breast health. It is important to know what changes to look for and to be aware of what may be important changes in their breasts. We look forward to working together with the Cancer Society and National Screening Unit on further aspects of breast health."

The NZBCF, National Screening Unit and the Cancer Society recommend that all breast symptoms should be reviewed by a health professional as soon as is possible.

Dr Madeleine Wall, Clinical Leader of BreastScreen Aotearoa, National Screening Unit, comments, "access to evidence based information is vital if we're to collectively reduce the impact of breast cancer. Women need to know that regular screening with mammography is the only test that has been shown to reduce breast cancer deaths. Training your fingers to feel for breast lumps monthly does not prevent breast cancer death. Instead, train your mind to act - see a doctor promptly if you notice any breast changes and have regular mammograms if you are aged 45 to 69."

Members from the three organisations will be attending a gathering to bless original artwork developed in 1997 as part of a breast awareness teaching resource for wahine Maori. The artwork, which was commissioned by the Cancer Society has been framed and hung in the foyer of the National Office, in Wellington where the ceremony will be held.

To view the joint Position Statement on Breast Awareness [click here](#).

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