



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 27, 2006

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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

More Women are Eligible for Free Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an observance meant to draw attention to a disease that claims tens of thousands of lives each year in the U.S.

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women after lung cancer. American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates for 2005 indicate 211,240 women in the U.S. were diagnosed with breast cancer and 40,410 died from the disease. A small percentage of breast cancer cases occur in men. ASC estimates for 2005 also indicate 1,690 men in the U.S. were diagnosed with breast cancer and 460 died from the disease.

The Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP) offers free breast and cervical cancer screenings to uninsured, age and income eligible women. In early September the state of Illinois expanded the program to serve more women. Before the expansion, IBCCP offered mammograms, breast exams, pelvic exams and Pap tests to women at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level – with a maximum income of \$40,000 for a family of four. The expansion raised the income threshold to 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, or \$50,000 for a family of four.

To be eligible, a woman must also be between the ages of 35 and 64 for breast exams, pelvic exams and Pap tests, and between 40 and 64 years of age for a mammogram. Younger, symptomatic women who meet the enrollment guidelines may be eligible for IBCCP services when referred by their health care provider.

Women who want to learn more about the program may call (toll free): 1-877-811-0193, or (217) 373-9281 in Champaign County.

Previously, a woman who was diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer outside of the program was not eligible for the Breast and Cervical Cancer Medicaid Treatment Act for treatment, even if she met the other IBCCP eligibility requirements. The second program expansion allows women who meet the requirements to enter the free treatment program offered by the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, regardless of whether they were diagnosed as part of the program. This allows eligible women to benefit from the program even though they were screened and diagnosed by a doctor, community health center or other health care facility outside the program.

The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District serves as the lead agency for the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program for Champaign, McLean and Vermilion Counties. This program provides hundreds of breast and cervical cancer screenings to eligible women each year. Thanks to the program, four local women were diagnosed with breast cancer and 12 local women were diagnosed with cervical cancer in the year ending June 30, 2006.

Regular breast and cervical cancer screening allows these cancers to be diagnosed at an early stage which is easier to treat and has better outcomes. Therefore, early detection saves lives.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends that women aged 40 and older get mammograms and clinical breast exams every 1-2 years.

The USPSTF strongly recommends screening for cervical cancer (Pap smears) in women who have been sexually active and have a cervix.

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