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FEBRUARY 2003

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The Ontario Breast Screening Program Newsletter

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As of January, 2003 there are 91
OBSP screening sites in
the province.

If you would like to be added
to the OBSP's mailing list
for position statements and
media responses or if you have
feedback on this newsletter,
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Recalling all women:

OBSP client retention

"One normal mammogram can't do much to reduce overall mortality from breast cancer," says Brenda Bass, regional administrator for the Ontario Breast Screening Program's Southeast Region, which has one of the highest retention rates in the province. "But a program of regular screening can monitor changes and detect abnormalities early — and that can save lives. And an important part of regular screening is an effective recall system."

Each time a woman comes to the OBSP for screening, she undergoes a risk assessment to determine if annual or biennial screening is appropriate. The OBSP's province-wide integrated client management system (ICMS) houses data on her previous screens and breast cancer risk factors, and supports program staff in facilitating the recall process.

About a month before a woman is due for a re-screen, the OBSP sends her a recall letter reminding her to make an appointment. If she doesn't respond, she'll receive a second letter, and, in some cases, a third prompt via the telephone.

The results are impressive: 85.7% of clients aged 50 to 69 screened in 1997 and 1998 returned for at least one re-screen at the program, and 80.6% of these returned within six months of their recommended screening dates. These numbers exceed the

Canadian targets for women in this age group, which call for a 75% re-screen rate within 30 months. Regular client surveys show that both patients and their physicians are very happy with the service.

Brenda attributes the OBSP's success to its recall system, high-quality screening and assessment services, an extremely competent and dedicated staff, and the "friendly, women-centred" culture of the OBSP.

"Women really appreciate the reminders. They like the fact that they can book their own appointments, get their results promptly, and, in many centres, get a clinical breast exam. And they want to return because of the quality of the care." All OBSP facilities are accredited by the Canadian Association of Radiologists; the OBSP also regularly inspects its facilities and evaluates its operations.

The recall process assists busy family physicians by helping to ensure that eligible patients are screened regularly and followed up, and that their results are communicated promptly.

Mortality from breast cancer is finally decreasing in Ontario, most likely due to a combination of early detection through regular screening and improved treatment. Through an effective, province-wide recall system, OBSP breast screening sites can help further decrease breast cancer deaths.

Expanding care

Three Central West sites become assessment affiliates



Since 1990, the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) has offered Ontario women comprehensive, organized breast cancer screening services. When it comes to breast health, however, screening is only one — albeit crucial — part of a larger picture. The success of breast screening depends in part on breast assessment to follow up and diagnose screen-detected abnormalities. In recent years, therefore, the OBSP has focused on expanding its services to include assessment, and has affiliated with 12 comprehensive, multidisciplinary breast assessment centres to provide Ontario women with a more complete range of services.

In the OBSP's Central West region, the Greater Niagara General Hospital in Niagara Falls, St. Catharine's General Hospital, and Welland Hospital all became assessment affiliates in April 2002. In addition to breast screening, they now offer a range of diagnostic procedures to OBSP clients with screen-detected abnormalities.

Multidisciplinary teams that include radiologists, breast imaging technologists, pathologists, nurses, breast surgeons, administrators, social workers, oncologists, and family physicians work together to ensure that women are diagnosed quickly. Nurse examiners act as designated patient navigators, coordinating the investigations and acting as points of contact and support for clients.

Before affiliating, "we audited our records and we knew that women were waiting far too long for resolution," says Bonnie Sipos, regional technical director of diagnostics for the Niagara Health System. "We knew we could do better. Now, within two weeks of an abnormal screen, we're able to bring women back for an 'assessment day': further views, biopsy, ultrasound, surgical consultation, whatever is needed. Women say it's wonderful, because once you hear that something 'shows' on your mammogram, there's a lot of anxiety. This program helps reduce that anxiety."

Staff at the Welland Hospital's breast screening and assessment centre, one of three Niagara Health System sites to recently affiliate with the OBSP. Organized screening and assessment services mean that women get results quickly, and "no one falls through the cracks."

Another advantage is that OBSP breast assessment tracks women from screening through diagnosis to outcome. That way, the centres can be sure that women receive the appropriate tests and that the results are followed up. "We know that women aren't slipping through the cracks."

The system also eases administrative work for family physicians, who would normally arrange tests and consultations on an ad hoc level. This may be one reason why family physicians in the region strongly support the program. The three Central West sites use the family physician model to recruit women. Program staff approach physicians in the area for names of eligible women and generate letters on behalf of the physicians inviting women to be screened.

"Once women get in, they know they'll get good care and information, and a letter telling them whether their results are normal or abnormal. They also get a recall letter. It isn't a hard sell."

Screening volumes for the three sites were excellent in 2001; the 2002 numbers will be even better. Now, the region has the happy problem of dealing with the large volume of women who want to come for screening, and is considering expanding programs.

Keeping doctors informed about the program all through the affiliation process — through lunch meetings and follow-up calls from the programs' radiologists — ensured that family physicians were comfortable with the program, and didn't think it was duplication of services.

"The affiliation process was relatively seamless," says Bonnie. "The materials and training they give you to start your program are excellent. Once the program is in place, they give constant support."

"We see the OBSP as a high-profile program in the community, a program that truly focuses on women. All of us have seen too many women who have never had a mammogram until it was too late. If their cancers had been detected earlier, those women may still be with us today."

A Woman's Guide to Breast Assessment

New OBSP resource fills a crucial gap in women's health information



The news of a breast change or abnormality can be terrifying for women. And the assessment process — the period of testing between finding and diagnosing an abnormality — can be agonizing, full of unanswered questions and emotional upheaval.

"It's like being in a straitjacket," says Lynn Ellis, a breast cancer survivor. "You want to ask a quick question, and our system doesn't allow for that. I came away feeling that more support during the assessment period would have been invaluable."

Lynn Ellis's experience mirrors that of many Ontario women. When Cancer Care Ontario's Breast Assessment Regional Coordinating Committee conducted a needs assessment, it found that, overwhelmingly, women wanted easier access to information and more emotional support during the assessment process.

And CCO responded. *A Woman's Guide to Breast Assessment* aims to fill the information gap around assessment, making the waiting period a little easier. Launched in CCO's South and Southwest regions in the fall of 2002, the guide explains simply the breast assessment process. It outlines the various diagnostic tests and procedures women may receive, and how to prepare for them — physically and emotionally. It answers commonly asked questions; helps women keep track of appointments, medications, and test results; and defines key terms. Testimonials throughout add an empathetic human face. There's even a section for men with breast abnormalities. Throughout, the booklet sends the strong message that the vast majority of breast abnormalities are non-cancerous.

In short, says Lynn Ellis, "we can give it to a woman who's just been told she has an abnormality to serve some of her most immediate and important needs."

Lynn Chappell, regional administrator for the OBSP's South and Southwest regions, coordinated the committees that created *A Woman's Guide*. The need for the resource hit home when she was diagnosed with breast cancer during the creative process.

"I found that the kind of information you need during assessment is quite practical. Certainly you're very anxious and fearful, but what you really want to know is, 'What test

will I have and what will it involve? How and when will I hear about the results? What should I tell my children?' It's simple information, but it isn't readily available. Now, all that information is in one book."

The guide, says Lynn Ellis, was also designed to be a tool for family physicians, who can give it to patients with breast abnormalities, "to provide answers to their questions the next day — or in the middle of the night."

A Woman's Guide was developed in consultation with and reviewed by family physicians, women, and other stakeholders in the breast health community, says Lynn Chappell. Copies have been sent to every family physician in the two regions, who have "handed them out left, right, and centre, and asked for more."

Now, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has reprinted the guide and made it available across the province. For a short time, women who receive an abnormal screening result at any OBSP site in the South and Southwest Regions will be sent a copy with their result letter. A follow-up survey will find out how helpful the booklet was. The next challenge will be to secure funding to ensure that *A Woman's Guide* stays updated and in print.

The booklet, say both Lynns, is a testament to the OBSP's commitment to supporting both women and their health-care providers.

A Woman's Guide to Breast Assessment was prepared by the Community Breast Assessment Committee of CCOR-South, chaired by Marina Clemens; the Breast Assessment Regional Coordinating Committee of CCOR-Southwest, chaired by Lynn Ellis; and the staff of the OBSP regional centres of South and Southwest Ontario under the leadership of Lynn Chappell, regional administrator. It is distributed to public health units and family physicians.

Copies are available from OBSP hub sites

(check www.cancercare.on.ca/obsp/ for phone numbers) and online at the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website. www.gov.on.ca/health

As of January, 2003 there are 91 OBSP screening sites in the province.

Central East Region

HUB SITES

North York OBSP Centre
Scarborough OBSP Centre

AFFILIATES

Alliston	Stevenson Memorial Hospital
Barrie	The Royal Victoria Hospital
Brampton	DiagnostiCare – Brampton
	William Osler Health Centre
Georgetown	William Osler Health Centre
Markham	Markham Mammography Clinic Inc.
Midland	Ontario Medical Imaging – Huronia
Mississauga	Credit Valley Diagnostic Centre
	Credit Valley Imaging Associates
	DiagnostiCare/King Xray and Ultrasound
	Dixie X-Ray Breast Imaging Centre
	Southlake Regional Health Centre
Newmarket	Ontario Medical Imaging
Orillia	Oshawa Clinic Imaging Centre
Oshawa	DiagnostiCare – Fairview
Toronto	DiagnostiCare – Lawrence
	Dixie X-Ray Ltd.
	Quality Medical Imaging Inc. – Bloor
	Quality Medical Imaging Inc. – Spadina
	Quantum Medical Imaging Services Inc.
	St. Michael's Hospital Health Centre
	Sunnybrook and Women's College
	Health Sciences Centre
	Victoria Park Mammography
Unionville	DiagnostiCare – Unionville

Central West Region

HUB

Hamilton OBSP Centre

AFFILIATES

Burlington	Burlington Ultrasound and Radiology
Cambridge	Cambridge Memorial Hospital
	RDS Diagnostics Ltd.
Guelph	Baker Street X-Ray and Ultrasound
Hamilton	St. Joseph's Healthcare
Niagara Falls	NHS – Greater Niagara General Hospital
Simcoe	Norfolk General Hospital
St. Catharines	NHS – St. Catharines General Hospital
Welland	NHS – Welland County General Hospital

Eastern Region

HUB

Ottawa OBSP Centre

AFFILIATES

Barry's Bay	St. Francis Memorial Hospital
Hawkesbury	Hawkesbury and District General Hospital
Ottawa	Merivale Medical Imaging
	Montfort Hospital
Pembroke	Pembroke General Hospital Inc.
Renfrew	Renfrew Victoria Hospital
Winchester	Winchester District Memorial Hospital

Northeast Region

HUB

Sudbury OBSP Centre

AFFILIATES

Bracebridge	South Muskoka Memorial Hospital
Hearst	Hôpital Notre Dame
Kapuskasing	Sensenbrenner Hospital
Kirkland Lake	Kirkland and District Hospital
New Liskeard	Temiskaming Hospital
North Bay	North Bay General Hospital
Sault Ste. Marie	Group Health Centre
Sturgeon Falls	West Nipissing General Hospital
Sudbury	DiagnostiCare – Sudbury
Timmins	Timmins and District Hospital

Northwest Region

Administrative Base Thunder Bay
Mobile coach serves Northwest Region.

AFFILIATES

Fort Frances	Riverside Breast Screening and Education Clinic
Thunder Bay	DiagnostiCare – Port Arthur Clinic
	Thunder Bay Medical Centre Diagnostics

South Region

HUB

Windsor OBSP Centre

AFFILIATES

Chatham	The Chatham Kent Health Alliance
Leamington	Leamington District Memorial Hospital
Windsor	DiagnostiCare – Windsor
	Windsor Regional Hospital

Southwest Region

HUB

London OBSP Centre

AFFILIATES

Goderich	Alexandra Marine & General Hospital
Kitchener	Grand River Hospital
	RDS Victoria/Kitchener Ultrasound,
	Mammography & X-Ray
Listowel	Listowel Memorial Hospital
London	DiagnostiCare Women's Imaging Centre
	London Health Sciences Centre
	London X-Ray Associates
	St. Joseph's Health Care
	Grey Bruce Health Services
Owen Sound	St. Thomas – Elgin General Hospital
St. Thomas	Lambton Hospitals Group
Sarnia	Stratford General Hospital
Stratford	Jenny Trout Centre – Ultrasound and
	Mammography Associates of Stratford
Strathroy	Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital
Walkerton	South Bruce Grey Health Centre
Woodstock	Woodstock General Hospital

Southeast Region

HUB

Kingston OBSP Centre

AFFILIATES

Belleville	Quinte Health Corporation – Belleville
Brockville	Brockville General Hospital
Campbellford	Campbellford Memorial Hospital
Peterborough	Peterborough Regional Health Centre
	Rogers Street Site
Picton	Quinte Health Corporation
	Prince Edward County Memorial
Port Perry	Port Perry Imaging
Trenton	Quinte Health Corporation – Trenton
Victoria County	Ross Memorial Hospital (Lindsay)

Breast Assessment Affiliates

Kingston	Hôtel Dieu Hospital
Listowel	Listowel Memorial Hospital
London	St. Joseph's Health Care
Niagara	NHS – Greater Niagara General Hospital
	NHS – St. Catharines General Hospital
	NHS – Welland County General Hospital
Ottawa	Ottawa Regional Women's Breast Health Centre
Pembroke	Pembroke General Hospital Inc.
Port Perry	Port Perry Imaging
Renfrew	Renfrew Victoria Hospital
Sudbury	The Sudbury Regional Breast Health Program
Toronto	St. Michael's Hospital Health Centre

On Site Assessment

Hamilton	Hamilton OBSP Centre
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