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News
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* * *Public forum on breast cancer
set March 2 by UT Health Science
Center

DALLAS--The public will get a chance to quiz medical experts on the often confusing subject of breast cancer at an open forum sponsored March 2 by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas.

Designed to present the current "state of the art" of medical knowledge and practice, the forum will feature panelists from the disciplines of surgery, oncology and radiology who will present the latest findings from their fields and then be open to questions from the audience.

"Breast Cancer--A Public Forum" is planned as the first of a series of public meetings designed to provide answers to complex and controversial areas of medicine. A major thrust of the effort will be to explain the topics in simple and understandable terms.

The first session on breast cancer will be at 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 2, in Gooch Auditorium on the health science center campus just south of Harry Hines Blvd. and Inwood Rd.

Moderating the first panel will be Dr. Al Roberts, a co-host on the Public Broadcast System's "Here's To Your Health" program and associate dean at UTHSCD. On the panel will be Dr. Ron Jones, professor of Surgery, Dr. Eugene Frenkel, oncologist and professor of Internal Medicine, both at the health science center, and Dr. Jerry Lee Barker, a therapeutic radiologist who is on the staffs of St. Paul, Presbyterian and Methodist Hospitals.

"We hope that this sort of interaction will give the people of our community a perspective and insight into complex medical problems," said Dr. Charles C. Sprague, president of the UT Health Science Center.

"It is quite possible that our experts may disagree on some topics," Dr. Sprague added, "but this is the nature of science--disagreement sometimes helps in the search for the truth."

The first session on breast cancer will be televised via facilities at the health science center and possibly may be used at a later date for patient education.

Dr. Daniel Foster, chairman of the forum committee and former host for the medical show "Daniel Foster, M.D." on public television, noted that "our medical school is internationally known for its contributions to research and teaching. We think that these "state of the art" seminars will enable us to share some of this expertise with our own community and at the same time learn more of its concerns.

Possibly no other topic in medicine has been debated so fully as breast cancer. While the death rate for some other cancers has dramatically decreased in the last 50 years, the incidence of death from breast cancer has remained basically the same. Among cancers it is the greatest killer of women.

During 1981 in this country alone, breast cancer was diagnosed in about 110,000 women and took the lives of more than 37,000 women. One woman in 11 will develop breast cancer.

2-breast cancer forum

Drug treatment and radiation therapy are often used in combination with surgery once breast cancer has been diagnosed. For many women, the primary concern after breast cancer surgery is a loss of femininity. The surgery, which often involves removal of the breast tissue and lymph nodes under the arm, is physically mutilating and can be emotionally devastating. Fears of death must also be dealt with since the lives of those who have had a breast cancer diagnosis will probably be shortened as a result.

Survival rates from breast cancer, which rose during the early part of this century, began leveling off around 1950 and have not improved significantly since then. However, adjuvant chemotherapy and radiation therapy after surgery have been shown to increase time between initial diagnosis and recurrence of the disease and have added years to a woman's life even when the disease is in advanced stages.

On the plus side, new physical aids and advanced methods of reconstructive surgery have been developed and are now an option for the woman who wants a measure of restoration.

Additional "state of the art" seminars on such subjects as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and depression are to be scheduled by the health science center in the coming months.

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