FROM PINK TO PREVENTION Summary

At *From Pink to Prevention* we are asking questions, offering answers and getting to the bottom of why environmental and occupational links to breast cancer are persistently ignored by governments, cancer research charities, the cancer establishment, and the breast cancer industry at large.

We build on this to campaign for a fundamental shift in perception and action on acknowledging and eliminating all known, probable and suspected environmental and occupational links to breast cancer.

LET’S START AT THE BEGINNING: PRIMARY PREVENTION

Let’s define one fundamental term. *Prevention*. But what do we mean when we put ‘primary’ in front of it?

We need the phrase ‘primary prevention’ to be more widely understood and shared.

**Q:** What do we mean by *primary* prevention?

**A:** To prevent the disease process from starting. In other words, not getting the disease in the first place.

In order to stop breast cancer *before* it starts we need *primary* prevention policies on breast cancer. Urgently.

*In 2005* the UK Working Group on Primary Prevention (WGPPBC) published a ground-breaking report: *Breast Cancer: An Environmental Disease. ‘From Pink to Prevention’*. Campaign co-founder Diana Ward was the lead author of the report.

*Almost a decade on,* and aside from the few from the scientific community who, despite enormous hurdles, have spoken out to argue the case for action upon known environmental and occupational links to breast cancer there is as much resistance as ever by the ‘cancer establishment’ – be that the big charities, government policy-makers or the science-medical-industry complex – to acknowledge and act upon the FACT that there ARE scientifically established environmental and occupational links to breast cancer.
So, as in 2005, our task remains the same:

- to challenge a number of prevailing views and attitudes about breast cancer
- establish a new view of breast cancer as a ‘preventable’ rather than ‘inevitable’ disease
- address the under-acknowledged and non-lifestyle factors associated with breast cancer
- inform and encourage new ways of thinking about this disease and the many possibilities for its prevention
- challenge the government to prioritise the primary prevention of breast cancer
- to support all efforts on, and to campaign for the elimination of all environmental and occupational links to breast cancer.

We need to expand the public’s knowledge; we need to increase the pressure on all those who refuse to take this issue seriously; we need to be asking the questions they refuse to address.

Q: And why is this so urgent?

A: Because we are ALL experiencing lifelong low-level exposure to health-harming carcinogenic, mutagenic, endocrine-disrupting, repro-toxic chemicals and other toxic substances including heavy metals. (MERCs)

We argue that lifelong, low-level exposure to the cocktail of hundreds of MERCs in our everyday lives – from pesticide residues in food to chemicals in consumer products and in the workplace – is linked to ever-rising rates of the disease. As part of this, we want governments and legislators to mark a new approach by acting on our proposed BEST option -that is to Ban, Eliminate, Substitute and Tag (label) all known and suspected MERCs - Mutagens, Endocrine Disruptors, Repro-toxins, Carcinogens for all our environments - living, working, land, sea and air and our first environment, the womb. This to happen in line with existing EU legislation on chemicals legislation (REACH) and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health hierarchy (COSHH) and by utilising initiatives like the EU Substitute It Now List (SIN) and USA initiative Green Screen, a method for identifying chemicals of high concern and safer alternatives.

THE 8 BARRIERS TO PREVENTION

From Pink to Prevention is deeply concerned by the total marginalization of environmental and occupational factors in relation to breast cancer incidence. We believe the ‘pink’ takeover of the disease has played a big part in this, with its predominant public focus on fundraising for breast cancer research effectively excluding or displacing other, equally vital elements of the public debate.

So, one of our key areas of work is to promote what we see as the barriers to primary prevention taking its rightful – and long overdue – place at the table. Once you start to get the ‘barriers’ picture, you are starting to join up the dots – and understand how the wider system works to effectively close down the environmental and occupational story...

Barriers to a ‘primary prevention’ focus There are a number of attitudes, mindsets and misconceptions standing in the way of a primary prevention focus on breast cancer. These include:
Acceptance – that we will get breast cancer
Fixation on treatment and control
Ignorance coupled with the role of the media in the way it reports the issue
Procrastination: More research is the standard response to call for prevention policies
Invisibility – chemicals everywhere but you can’t see them
Fear – of the big C.
Vested interests and the status quo – cancer is a huge money making business.

BARRIER 8 - VESTED INTERESTS

We consider ‘vested interests’ to be a major barrier to getting primary prevention onto the public and political agenda. From Pink to Prevention will raise this issue as the one which is most notably absent from the breast cancer debate. It is precisely because vested interests are a relatively unexplored, diffuse and difficult field of enquiry in relation to breast cancer prevention that we believe this work should be undertaken and is worthy of a campaign-style focus.

Vested interests manifest in different ways – from corporate ‘pinkwash’ to the closing down of scientists who point the finger at chemicals and cancer; from cancer charities making policy and marginalising the role of chemicals in cancer to the big chemicals companies influencing policy at the EU or Congress; to the media monopolisation by those with vested interests in promoting and sustaining the mantra that breast cancer is a ‘lifestyle disease’ and the direction of funding to research which only investigates lifestyle factors.

ABOUT US

From Pink to Prevention is a new initiative formed in 2013 by Deborah Burton from Tipping Point North South, Helen Lynn from the Alliance for Cancer Prevention and Diana Ward of the Working Group on Primary Prevention of Breast Cancer. It draws on our campaigning expertise over the past two decades in drawing public, media and political attention to the issues of environmental and occupational links to cancer - especially breast cancer. Initially, at the Women’s Environmental Network, through work on Putting Breast Cancer on the Map which began in 1996 through to the publishing of Breast Cancer: An Environmental Disease in 2005 by the UK Working Group on the Primary Prevention of Breast Cancer and the development of their campaign No More Breast Cancer. From Pink to Prevention follows up the work started at the No More Breast Cancer Campaign - created as a result of our document ‘Breast Cancer, an environmental disease’. In that document, we identify and explain our views about the many ‘barriers’ to understanding primary prevention i.e. stopping the disease before it starts.
LINKS

www.frompinktoprevention.org
info@frompinktoprevention.org

Greenscreen - www.greenscreenchemicals.org/
COSHH - http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/
SIN LIST - http://www.chemsec.org/what-we-do/sin-list