THE BREAST CANCER INDUSTRY

The 'breast cancer industry' is a generic term for the vast and ever-expanding multi-faceted industry which has grown up around breast cancer, incorporating all services, products, materials and technologies required for the orthodox treatment and management of the disease in all its forms and through all of its stages.

The multiplicity of sectors which make up the breast cancer industry, together represent the barrier of industry self-interest to the advancement of disease prevention on a massive scale.

Government-held statistics based on data from cancer registries show the escalating pattern of breast cancer. For example, in the UK, 1 in 12 women were at risk of developing breast cancer in 1995. Today the number is 1 in 8 - the same as in Australia and the USA.

In December 2013 the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), reported a sharp rise in breast cancer worldwide:

*In 2012, 1.7 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer and there were 6.3 million women alive who had been diagnosed with breast cancer in the previous five years. Since the 2008 estimates, breast cancer incidence has increased by more than 20%, while mortality has increased by 14%. Breast cancer is also the most common cause of cancer death among women (522 000 deaths in 2012) and the most frequently diagnosed cancer among women in 140 of 184 countries worldwide. It now represents one in four of all cancers in women. Breast cancer is also a leading cause of cancer death in the less developed countries of the world.*

While only one among many 21st century diseases, it is as the major cancer for women world-wide that this disease above others, in providing employment for the countless numbers engaged in developing, producing, marketing, purchasing and delivering the multitudinous range of goods and services which underpin it, can be defined and described as a mega industry in its own right.

From Pink to Prevention
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A non-stop rampant disease, breast cancer offers limitless opportunities for a multiplicity of service and product industries to vie for market position in the lucrative and secure business of provisioning the requirements (material, techno, pharma, medical, diagnostic, cosmetic etc.) for the treatment and management of her breast cancer through every disease phase, from pre-diagnosis to her life’s end, in every woman affected by the disease.

What place can we reasonably expect there to be for disease prevention in this vast, multi-faceted, ever-expanding superstructure – the 21st century breast cancer industry - whose own growth, health and continuity is entirely dependent upon continuity and growth in the pattern of the disease to which it owes its very existence and from which it derives its profit?

What interest can we reasonably expect there to be in prevention of breast cancer among the people whose own livelihoods, career paths, peer group and professional status, financial security and profit margins are dependent upon the continuity and growth, both of the disease itself and the multiplicity of profit-driven industries which support, treat, service and manage it?

Let’s be clear about this. In industry terms there is no profit in prevention. It is only in human terms and terms of reduction in health budgets that there is profit in prevention.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SOURCES OF THEIR BENEFITS FROM BREAST CANCER FOR INDUSTRY MEMBERS

DOUBLE BENEFIT
Industries whose products contribute both to disease incidence and disease treatment.

DIRECT BENEFIT

RESEARCH
Cancer research employs millions and is sustained by funds from government, industry and public sources. As major drivers of public fund-raising for cancer research, cancer organisations and charities have a central role in setting and maintaining the research agenda.

DIAGNOSTICS
Industries which design, develop, manufacture and market specialist electronic equipment used in diagnosis and ongoing management of breast cancer.

MEDICAL
The industry which sets and controls treatment practice standards and protocols in life-long management of the disease

EDUCATION
Industries which train people to work at all levels of skills required in any phase of the disease process by a breast cancer patient.

DRUGS

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Industries which develop, manufacture and market drugs for use in the treatment, control and management of all phases of the disease

SPECIAL PRODUCTS
Industries which develop, manufacture and market specialist products for breast cancer patients.

SERVICES
Industries which develop and/or provide services for breast cancer patients

INDIRECT BENEFIT
Industries which have a secondary role in the production processes of any materials, pharmaceuticals, equipment, personal care products, tools, cosmetics, office products, therapeutic and electronic items used both by both treatment providers and breast cancer patients in life-long management of the disease.

Industries and Agencies which provide patient support services:
- at specialist clinics;
- in hospitals;
- in communities;
- in the marketplace.