

Brexit & Breast cancer: what does Brexit have to do with breast cancer?

Invitation to a Breast Cancer Prevention Month event - hosted by Helen Hayes MP

When: 26 October 2017
Where: Attlee Room, Portcullis House
Time: 11 am - 1 pm
RSVP: Helen Lynn
helen@frompinktoprevention.org
Deborah Burton: 07779203455

Speakers include:
Helen Hayes MP
Zarin Hainsworth OBE, Chair NAWO
Helen Lynn, Pink to Prevention
Hilda Palmer, Hazards Campaign
Nick Mole Policy Office Pesticide Action
Network UK



As we come to the end of Breast Cancer Prevention Month, we will be asking the question '*what are the implications for breast cancer after Brexit?*' and exploring the answers.

The chances are you'll never have thought about breast cancer prevention in relation to Brexit. Yet they are linked. For example, our clean beaches and seas benefit from progressive EU legislation. Our health as citizens, consumers and workers most certainly has done and continues to benefit for EU legislation.

The European chemicals regulation (REACH) is a highly sophisticated, progressive pan-EU system to control toxic chemicals and, though not perfect, is the best in the world. At its heart is 'the precautionary principle' which means to take action to prevent harm, even if there is uncertainty. For the UK to be de-coupled from REACH would have a devastating impact on many aspects of consumer, workplace and environmental health and our economic wellbeing.

Women benefit from this EU regulation via the protection REACH offers to our health in preventing exposures to chemicals linked to breast and other

cancers along with health and safety legislation in the workplace. These exposures happen in the home, workplace and wider environment and are present from pre-birth throughout our entire lives.

Given that no cancer strategy in England addresses the environmental and occupational risk factors for breast cancer, there has been an almost doubling of breast cancer cases since the 1970s. This increase is not accounted for by 'lifestyle risk factors' (smoking, alcohol and weight): they account for 30-50% of breast cancer cases. Since 50% of cases have no known cause, to ignore the scientific evidence linking environmental and occupational exposures, especially in the workplace, is highly negligent.

Six years ago the [World Health Organisation](#) called for governments to include environmental and occupational prevention measures as part of all national cancer plans. Additionally the [American Public Health Association](#) called for the links between breast cancer and certain chemical exposures to be acknowledged by their government. Given the ever rising rates, why is there such reluctance by all concerned to act? For 60 years [evidence](#) linking these risks to breast cancer has increased: why are we still waiting?

NOTE

Worker's rights and health and safety will be severely threatened post-Brexit. If business will see the commercial opportunity to cut what they would regard as 'red tape' and 'burdensome' health and safety standards which currently serve to protect workers, thousands of people will be adversely affected. Rolling back from these standards will have devastating effects on breast cancer prevention. If regulation of toxic chemicals linked to breast cancer is be 'traded away' on the back of an increased bottom line, women and their families will suffer.

We cannot afford -either morally or economically - the increasing numbers of women diagnosed with breast cancer. This number has risen from 1 in 12 in the 1990s to 1 in 8 in 2017. In the EU 28 where 1 in 8 women will develop the disease in her lifetime, the total economic cost is reckoned to be [16 billion euros](#).

In post-Brexit Britain, we must do all we can to ensure we remain under the progressive EU chemicals legislation - for the sake of our health, workplace and environment.

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