

Women At Risk

Please join us!



Women At Risk's
**Nineteenth
 Annual
 Luncheon**

Monday, May 10th, 2010

Waldorf=Astoria,
 New York City

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Susan Love
*President, Dr. Susan Love
 Research Foundation
 Author, "Dr. Susan Love's
 Breast Book" &
 "Live a Little: Breaking
 the Rules Won't Break
 Your Health"*

Honoring

Dr. Herbert Pardes
*President & CEO,
 NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital*

For more information,
 call (212) 305-4486.

Dear Friends,

Women At Risk celebrates 19 years of enhancing the lives of women affected by breast cancer this year, and we thank you for your continued support and commitment to our cause. While 2009 was a difficult year for everyone, we were able to maintain, and even expand, some of our programs, thanks to your generosity.

We addressed the trend towards personalized breast cancer risk-assessment and treatment at our Laurie Bass Sklaver Annual Symposium in October, funded four innovative research studies and launched a new advocacy

program. The High-Risk Program at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell also achieved great success in its first few months.

In addition, 2009 was a year of changes in how we communicate with our supporters. To supplement this Newsletter, we added Email Newsletters, a Blog, Facebook and Twitter. We hope you'll take advantage of these many ways to stay connected to WAR throughout the year.

We hope you enjoy reading about Women At Risk's latest work. I look forward to seeing all of you at our 19th Annual Luncheon on May 10th.

Bonnie Pressman, *President*

High-Risk Program Expands to Weill Cornell Medical Center

By *Lisa Held*

On November 19th, 2009, Women At Risk celebrated the expansion of the High-Risk Program to New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

Two Weill Cornell physicians, Dr. Tessa Cigler, a medical oncologist, and Dr. Alexander Swistel, a breast surgeon, spoke to the audience about what it means to be at high risk for breast cancer and the strategies that are available for reducing or managing risk. The physicians addressed issues such as increased surveillance, chemopreventative drugs and new surgical techniques like nipple-sparing mastectomies.

The expansion of the High-Risk Program is an exciting development for Women At Risk because it will give high-risk women at Weill Cornell the opportunity to benefit from personalized risk-management plans, emotional

support through the High-Risk Support Group and educational events that provide up-to-date information on the changing landscape of breast cancer risk and treatment.

The expansion will also allow WAR to increase and diversify the data in the High-Risk Registry, which is used to study breast cancer risk factors.

Since Women At Risk expanded to Weill Cornell, over 65 patients have been enrolled in the High-Risk Program there. Participating physicians include Dr. Anne Moore, Dr. Alexander Swistel, Dr. Tessa Cigler, Dr. Rache Simmons and Dr. Eleni Tousimis.

If you think you, or someone you know, may be eligible for this program, and you would like more information, contact Rhonda Theodore at (212) 821-0635 or rhm9001@nyp.org or Amy Whiffen at (212) 305-3238 or awhiffen@womenatrisknyc.org. ■

To Contact Women At Risk:

Call (212) 305-9525
or email
info@womenatrisknyc.org

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The team at Weill Cornell: Geera Butala, Dr. Alexander Swistel, Dr. Tessa Cigler and Rhonda Theodore

Helping Women Help Themselves

October 24, 2009
Free Screening Day Statistics

- 89 women received breast screenings
- 60 women received cervical screenings
- 30 women received colorectal screenings

Special thanks to The Larry & Jane Scheinfeld Foundation for enabling Women At Risk to provide these life-saving services free of charge, and to the volunteers who made this day a success!

The Stacey Garil Womack Resource Library

Staffed by breast cancer survivors and offering confidential one-on-one support.

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Monday–Friday from
10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Bilingual support is available
on Wednesdays and Thursdays
from 1 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

WAR Funded Research Investigates Measuring Tissue Damage Caused by Radiation

By Amy Whiffen

In January of 2010, a study funded by Women At Risk was accepted for publication in the *International Journal of Radiation Oncology Biology Physics*. The study, “Quantitative Ultrasonic Evaluation of Radiation-Induced Late Tissue Toxicity: Pilot study of breast cancer radiotherapy,” was led by Dr. Tian Liu, former Assistant Professor of Medical Physics in the Department of Radiation Oncology at Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons. He is currently on the faculty at Emory University School of Medicine.

Dr. Liu’s study investigated a new, non-invasive and quantitative ultrasound-based technique that measures radiation toxicity, or how much harm the therapy has caused to the normal breast tissue. The technique combines conventional ultrasound with ultrasonic tissue characterization, which measures changes in the tissue cells.

Radiation treatment is effective for women with early-stage breast cancer because it reduces the chance of recurrence and prevents the development of additional tumors. However, it can also damage normal breast tissue. Since the damage caused to normal tissue is a limiting factor in radiation therapy, an objective measurement is needed to measure radiation-induced changes of the skin.

The study found that the new technique produced measurements that were similar to the doctors’ own assessments, which are based on

factors such as how the skin looks and feels and the patient’s discomfort. It also found significant differences in tissue damage between the treated and untreated breast. These two factors suggest that the test may be accurate for measuring radiation toxicity.

This pilot study had a small sample size and short follow-up time. However, the findings were encouraging and warrant a future study of larger scope to confirm the reliability of the technique.

This tool could improve the physician’s ability to detect and treat normal breast tissue that has been damaged in patients treated with radiation and could become increasingly valuable as new strategies for radiation therapy are evaluated, such as treatment in which the total dose is divided into less-frequent, large doses (hypofractionation) and partial breast radiation therapy.

The findings were presented at six different conferences and meetings between 2007 and 2009. Additional manuscripts were submitted for publication and are currently being reviewed or edited. Congratulations to Dr. Liu and his research team on a well-executed study that contributes to the treatment and care of breast cancer patients.

Since its inception, WAR has provided over one million dollars of seed funding for more than 50 innovative research projects dedicated to breast cancer. Dr. Liu’s study is one of several that have been published in major medical journals and presented at conferences and symposia. ■

Physicians Say Breast Cancer Treatment is Becoming Personalized

By Lisa Held

On October 29th, 2009, close to 200 people attended the Laurie Bass Sklaver Annual Symposium to learn about the future of breast cancer risk prediction and management. The Annual Symposium is held in loving memory of Laurie Bass Sklaver, a great friend and former Women At Risk board president, who believed in education as an important weapon in the fight against breast cancer.

Three renowned medical professionals from Columbia University and Weill Cornell Medical Centers, Dr. Linda Vahdat, Ms. Donna Russo and Dr. Ronald Crystal, spoke at the Symposium, which was entitled “It’s Time to Get Personal: Breast Cancer and the Future of Individualized Care.” Dr. Kathie-Ann Joseph, WAR’s Medical Director, acted as the moderator.

Dr. Linda Vahdat opened the presentation by commenting on how rapidly breast cancer treatment is changing and then discussed the latest trends of tailoring treatment to an individual’s particular cancer. Tools such as Oncotype Dx and Mammaprint use the genetic makeup of tumors to determine how they will respond to a particular therapy, making it easier for physicians to decide whether to prescribe more or less aggressive treatment plans.

Dr. Vahdat also addressed new therapies that may prevent metastases such as bisphosphonates, which have typically been used as bone-strengthening drugs, PARP inhibitors for triple-negative and BRCA positive cancers and anti-angiogenic

drugs, which cut off the blood supply to tumors. “If I had to say there was a trend in breast cancer therapy these days,” she concluded, “there’s no doubt that it’s all about the target.”

Ms. Donna Russo then spoke about risk assessment and management for familial breast and ovarian cancer. She said that the benefit of assessing risk is that by classifying people into groups, it makes it possible to assign them personalized interventions.

She discussed the limitations of the Gail Model, which was historically used to determine breast cancer risk but did not take into account many key factors and introduced BRC Apro, a newer model which utilizes additional risk factors.

“In the near future,” Ms. Russo said, “we will have a lot more information on the women who actually test negative for BRCA 1 and 2 but still have a strong or moderate family history, and we’ll try to understand what the genetic components are there.”

Dr. Ronald Crystal wrapped up the presentations by giving a broad overview of advances in genetics and how they apply to breast cancer. Eventually, he said, we are going to be able to tailor all drugs to genetics, and doctors will use genetic information to determine appropriate treatments for their patients.

“Medicine has a remarkable revolution in terms of genetics,” he concluded, “and it’s going to affect all of us.”

A complete video recording of the Symposium is available at www.womenatrisknyc.org. ■

Support Groups

Breast Cancer Support Group

For dates and times, call (212) 342-0297.

Spanish-Language Breast Cancer Support Group

For dates and times, call (212) 305-9894.

High-Risk Support Group

For dates and times, call (212) 305-3269.

WAR would like to thank:

The Friends and Family of Laurie Bass Sklaver

The Greater NYC Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure

Sanofi Aventis

For their generous support of the 2009 Symposium.

Prevent-Cure-Empower

Women’s Health & Wellness Lecture Series

April 21st—

Breast Cancer Advocacy

June 9th—

Advances in Breast Surgery & Reconstruction

September 15th—

Clinical Trials 101

For more information or to RSVP, call (212) 305-3269.

The difference is you...

Thank you to all of our volunteers who make a difference every day in the Stacey Garil Womack Resource Library:

Helene Bland
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Helen Tarr
Angela Vallaro



Dr. Kathie-Ann Joseph moderates speaker panel: Dr. Linda Vahdat, Ms. Donna Russo and Dr. Ronald Crystal

Thanks to Our Donors

Women At Risk would like to thank all of our donors for their generous support. While lack of space precludes us from acknowledging each person individually, we would like to give special recognition to the individuals and companies whose cumulative gifts to WAR totaled \$5,000 or more in 2009. A complete list of those who donated over \$500 is available on our website at <http://nyp.org/services/war/support-war.html>.

A gift to Women At Risk is a thoughtful way to honor a friend, family member or caregiver. For stock or wire transfers or to make a donation, please use the enclosed envelope or call Kavita Desai at 212-305-4486.

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*Included in this list are donations received between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2009.
We apologize for any inadvertent omissions.*

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