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ASPS ISSUE BRIEF

Breast Cancer Patient Education Act of 2015

Empowering women with greater options on their road to recovery

Background

In 2015, an estimated 231,840 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected to be diagnosed among women in the United States¹. The Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998² requires health plans that offer breast cancer coverage to also provide for breast reconstruction and prostheses. Breast reconstruction can be an important part of the recovery process, as it can impact the patient's psychological and sexual well-being.

While some eligible women with breast cancer undergo breast reconstruction, many women – particularly those of racial and ethnic minority groups – are not informed about their care options. This is particularly concerning as African-American women under the age of 40 have a greater incidence of breast cancer than Caucasian women of the same age. Furthermore, breast cancer is the most common cancer among Hispanic women.

Less than half of all women requiring a mastectomy are currently offered breast reconstruction surgery³ and fewer than one in five elect to undergo the procedure.⁴ While there is little consensus as to why women do not choose to undergo the procedure following their mastectomy, a recent study in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* confirmed that almost one-fifth of women who do not undergo breast reconstruction reported a lack of knowledge regarding the procedure.⁵

The Solution

Women need to be informed about their options post-mastectomy. The *Breast Cancer Patient Education Act of 2015* requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to plan and implement an education campaign to inform breast cancer patients about the availability and coverage of breast reconstruction and other available alternatives post-mastectomy. Educational materials will inform women of their right to breast reconstruction under federal law and provide women with information about when breast reconstruction or prostheses may be appropriate within their recovery plan. This campaign will support existing collateral on breast cancer awareness that is already created by the Office of Women's Health and the Office of Minority Health.

Congressional Request

Cosponsor and pass the *Breast Cancer Patient Education Act of 2015* (H.R.2540/S.1192) to ensure that survivors of breast cancer are aware of their options post-mastectomy.

Updated 09/22/2015

To cosponsor H.R.2540, contact Molly.McDonnell@mail.house.gov (Rep. Lance) or Elizabeth.Brown@mail.house.gov (Rep. Castor)
To cosponsor S.1192, contact Desiree.Mowry@blunt.senate.gov (Sen. Blunt) or Tasha.Lee@brown.senate.gov (Sen. Brown)

¹ The American Cancer Society, 2015

² Public Law 105-277

³ Potter S, Mills N, Cawthorn S, Wilson S, Blazeby J. Exploring inequalities in access to care and the provision of choice to women seeking breast reconstruction surgery: a qualitative study. *Br J Cancer*. 2013 Sep 3.

⁴ Agarwal, Shailesh, Lisa Pappas, Leigh Neumayer, and Jayant Agarwal. "An Analysis of Immediate Postmastectomy Breast Reconstruction Frequency Using the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Database." *The Breast Journal* 17.4 (2011): 352-58. Print.

⁵ Morrow, Monica, Yun Li, Amy K. Alderman, Reshma Jagsi, DPhil, Ann S. Hamilton, John J. Graff, Sarah T. Hawley, Steven J. Katz. "Access to Breast Reconstruction After Mastectomy and Patient Perspectives on Reconstruction Decision Making." *JAMA Surg*. 2014;149(10):1015-1021. Print.