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Innovative Outreach to Reduce Breast Cancer Risk

An innovative outreach program using educational videos is now available to inform teens and young women about emerging scientific evidence suggesting the risk of breast cancer may be linked to exposure to "environmental estrogens." Cornell University's Breast Cancer and Environmental Risk Factors Program (BCERF) has made the multimedia program available to help explain the strong connection between exposure to estrogen in all forms and breast cancer, what environmental estrogens are and where they are found, and to inform women on what they can do today to help reduce their lifetime exposure.

"Modeling studies suggest that even small exposures to a number of environmental estrogens may add up, and work together with the body's own estrogen over time to contribute to increased breast cancer risk," says Dr. Suzanne Snedeker, BCERF's associate director of translational research.

Historically, breast cancer educational programs have been directed to older women, and few programs have used media that appeals to younger audiences, as this new BCERF program does.

"Reaching younger audiences using media they can relate to is so important," Snedeker says, "because breast cancer may take decades to develop, so knowledge of all risk factors and taking advantage of opportunities to reduce exposure whenever possible are important considerations for women in their teens, 20s and 30s. These short videos show women how to take simple steps to avoid exposure to environmental estrogens found in everyday products."

The series of three videos uses live-action and line animation to highlight avoidance behaviors that can reduce exposure to environmental estrogens and emphasizes the importance of taking action to preserve our common environment.

The video "Cosmetics and More", lists some of the ingredients in personal care products and cosmetics that are estrogen mimics; "Plastics" discusses the release of estrogenic chemicals from plastics exposed to high heat or heavy usage; and "In the Dump and Down the Drain" explains how estrogenic heavy metals used in personal electronics and the use of detergents that can breakdown into environmental estrogens can contaminate the environment.

Funds to support this project were provided by the New York State Department of Health. The BCERF program is part of the Sprecher Institute for Comparative Cancer Research in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell, and the BCERF videos were produced at the college by Dr. Jodi Korich, director of the Partners in Animal Health program, and her development team.

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