

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND YOUNG WOMEN'S BREAST CANCER PROGRAM

Specialized program is much-needed for young women at the busiest life-stage and more likely to die of breast cancer.

TORONTO (November 20, 2008) – Sunnybrook's Odette Cancer Centre starts a first-of-its-kind in Canada, *PYNK*: Breast Cancer Program for Young Women, for women 40 years or younger with breast cancer who studies indicate are more likely to recur and die of their disease than older patients and are at greatest risk of psychological and social distress.

PYNK: Breast Cancer Program for Young Women addresses the unique medical and psychosocial needs of younger women, conducts more targeted research to better prevent breast cancers and increase cure rates in this understudied group, and provides specialized continuum of care from diagnosis and treatment to long-term follow-up.

"These women are from diverse cultural backgrounds and have a disproportionate number of problems such as higher recurrence and short term and longer-term side effects from their treatment and account for a higher percentage of all deaths from breast cancer," says Dr. Ellen Warner, lead for the program and medical oncologist, Odette Cancer Centre, Sunnybrook.

"On an emotional level, younger women face their breast cancer diagnosis while coping with intimate early relationships, fertility uncertainty, younger families, emerging careers, social isolation, body image issues, and need for personal time," says Dr. Ellen Warner, associate professor, Department of Medicine, University of Toronto.

PYNK: Breast Cancer Program for Young Women was developed in collaboration with several young breast cancer survivors and by an interdisciplinary clinical and scientific team from the Odette Cancer Centre's Breast Site Group. Patients of the Program are supported by an Advanced Practice Nurse 'system navigator' who assesses the patient's individual psychosocial needs for example related to mastectomy, loss of fertility and premature menopause resulting from treatment, body changes, body image and intimacy issues. The nurse navigator fast-tracks referrals to fertility clinics and or genetic counseling and steers support including access to targeted clinical trials, services in the community such as peer-support programs, and age-appropriate literature to help young children and teenagers better understand their mother's cancer treatment and journey.

About five percent or of all breast cancer patients or over 1,000 young women a year, are 40 years or younger at diagnosis. In 2008 an estimated 22,400 women in Canada will be diagnosed with breast cancer.