

## Battling breast cancer with new treatments, awareness and support

**BY DOLORES BUNDY**  
Contributing Writer

Women with breast cancer often say that one of the best ways to live life to the fullest is to become knowledgeable about the disease and the various support vehicles available. Learning about the diagnosis and numerous treatment options may help to make decisions about health care.

According to The American Cancer Society, the first step in the learning process begins with talking to your physician. Every woman's breast cancer diagnosis is different.

"What a physician recommends for one woman may not be right for another. Developing a list of questions to ask is a good first start to addressing concerns and getting information," says Mansoon Saleh, M.D.,

principal investigator and director of clinical research at Georgia Cancer Specialists, the largest community-based clinical research program in Georgia. "There are various stages of breast cancer and treatment options—hormone therapy, chemotherapy, biology targeted therapy, radiation therapy and surgery. Our need is to determine what treatment options will work for you by weighing the risks and benefits with your physician," adds Saleh.

### Treatments

According to the American Cancer Society, *hormonal therapy* can be used to reduce the growth, spread, and recurrence of breast cancer. If the cancer is found to be of the type that may be sensitive to estrogen, hormonal therapy may be able to keep estrogen from helping the cancer cells to grow and divide. The presence of estrogen receptors (a message-carrying protein that may stimulate tumor growth) in the cancerous tumor is the best way to predict a woman's response to hormonal therapy. Your doctor can do a test to determine the estrogen receptor status of your tumor.

*Chemotherapy* may be used if it is believed the breast cancer will not respond to hormonal therapy. Chemotherapy is the use of drugs that target and destroy rapidly dividing cells, including cancer cells. It is frequently used in metastatic breast cancer and used in locally advanced breast cancer to shrink the tumor and make it operable.

*Biologically Targeted Therapy* covers a range of new options. These therapies target specific features of cancer cells and are intended to have less effect on normal cells, which may reduce the chance of side effects like those caused by current cancer treatments. Types of treatment include monoclonal antibodies, which bind to proteins on the cancer cell surface to slow down cancer cell growth; angiogenesis inhibitors, which are intended to prevent the

growth of new blood vessels and so cutoff the supply of oxygen and nutrients to cancer cells; and signal transduction inhibitors, which block the signals inside the cancer cell that promote the cells to divide and in turn cause the cancer to grow. Most of these approaches are still experimental and would be offered as part of a clinical trial.

*Radiation Therapy* uses penetrating beams of high-energy waves or streams of particles to kill and hinder the growth of cancer cells. In metastatic disease, radiation is most commonly used to treat symptoms in breast cancer that has spread to the bone.

*Surgery* permits both diagnostic tissue removal and may help with control of cancer. In some cases, a physician may recommend surgery to remove tissue from the breast or lymph node.

### New advancements

According to the Georgia Cancer Specialists (GCS), the largest private oncology/hematology practice in the Southeast, there has been recent testing of a new experimental drug found to block genes that prevent cancerous cells from dying. The first patient ever to receive this drug, which is administered in a pill form, was treated on January 31, 2005, at the GCS Northside office, located on the campus of Northside Hospital.

"The experimental drug, AT-101, comes from the gossypol class and has been found to block the bcl-2 and bcl-x oncogenes, two genes that are highly expressed on a variety of tumor types," informs Saleh. "Oncogenes are cancer-causing genes that prevent cancerous cells from dying. Blocking such genes leads to cancer cell death (apoptosis) and is one way of specifically targeting tumors."

A new study sponsored by the University of Alberta in Canada sheds light on the experience of male patients suffering from breast cancer. The preliminary results are to be released at the National

Conference for Men's Health in Atlanta. Researchers looked at the treatment of 20 men, ages 44 to 85, to determine the different methods that are used by men and women to cope with the disease. "There is a general lack of awareness on male breast cancer both on the part of health professionals and the population at large," says researcher Eddie Pituskin. "Many men don't know that they are susceptible to that form of cancer as well. This year, about 150 Canadian men are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer."

Pituskin suspects that there may be a significant number of additional cases that go undiagnosed and untreated. He adds, "Oftentimes, breast cancer in men is not diagnosed until it is too late, because male patients are not even aware that they can get breast cancer."

There is also an herbal tea with the main ingredient, Burdock Root, which is known to specifically help neutralize toxins in the blood and is an effective herbal remedy for many ailments according to the naysayers of traditional medicine. It also stimulates liver secretions, thus helping the liver eliminate toxic compound build ups. It strengthens the liver and other vital organs with necessary nutrients.

Burdock Root is high in chromium, iron, magnesium, silicon, and thiamine, and contains many other ingredients such as niacin, riboflavin, vitamin A and vitamin C to name a few. This is an important difference between chemical drugs and natural medicine. The chemical drugs and symptom therapies that are traditionally prescribed by main street medicine provide the body with no nutrients to help the body's own immune system fight whatever ailment you have. There are many promising studies currently being conducted for breast cancer victims, but as always, preventative measures are best.

### through support, hope and faith

Cheryl Brown was diagnosed with breast cancer on three different occasions since 1985 at the age of 24. At the age of 31, she received a total mastectomy. In 1999, at the age of 38, cancer returned for a third time. After going through such trying times, Brown turned her misfortunes into a very powerful and necessary support group for breast cancer survivors.

"I was not accepting my third diagnosis," Brown says. "I began surgery and chemotherapy in 2000. I questioned, 'God, 'Why Me?'" [Eventually]; I knew I was to start a foundation to help other cancer victims. Battling a third time with cancer lead me to start my company called L I V E D 2 T E L L ([www.lived2tell.org](http://www.lived2tell.org)). I was a mother of three. They needed me and I need to do whatever I could to be there for them, so I coped by staying focused on the Lord."

Brown continued, "I put God first and then I went after things that were positive and directed my energy in helping others. It is very important for anyone who is dealing with cancer to talk about it because you are releasing the fear that is set inside of you. Fear puts us in bondage and when bondage occurs, negativity arises and this can produce stress which I believe leads to cancer. Be free ... live t o

tell!"

Brown's LIVED2TELL has garnered a lot of supporters, including Shear Carter. Carter was 30-years-old when diagnosed with breast cancer in August, 2000. She said, "I feel I survived my battle with cancer through the support I received from LIVED2TELL. Cheryl was there for me emotionally as well as physically by taking me to all of my appointments - you name when, she was there." Carter added, "What was amazing to me is that I did not realize that she was battling her third battle with cancer while helping me. I believe that God put Cheryl in my life to help with both my physical and emotional issues because she had experienced that as well. When going through something like cancer, I believe you need someone who can relate to your illness and Cheryl was that to me. This is why I have dedicated myself to helping LIVED2TELL; I am an active board member."

For more information on LIVED2TELL, visit their website at [www.lived2tell.org](http://www.lived2tell.org), or call (770) 484-8811.

### Health Fair

The Atlanta Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce (AMBCC) is excited to announce our AIDS Awareness Health Fair. This innovative event is designed to provide information and resources on the AIDS epidemic to a community that is often underserved. The information provided will address AIDS Prevention & Safe Sex, AIDS Awareness (including AIDS testing), and living with AIDS - resources for individuals with the AIDS virus their families.

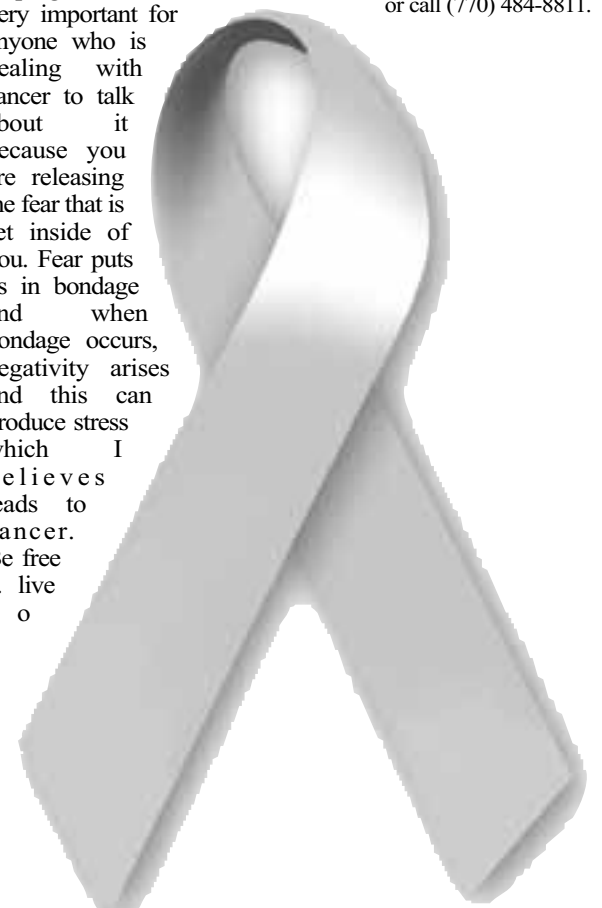
**Who:** The Atlanta Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce Community Affairs Council

**What:** AIDS Awareness Health Fair

**When:** Saturday, November 4, 2006

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**Where:** Redan/Trotti Branch of the DeKalb County Public Library 1569 Wellborn Rd., Redan, GA



Fighting breast cancer