



B-GREAT Milestones

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Breast Cancer Genetics Research Education and Advocacy Team (B-GREAT) initiative based at the Moffitt Cancer Center, we are happy to present our October 2015 Newsletter in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In this issue we provide:

- A summary of findings from the BEST/BENITA Studies highlighted in two research articles published by our team;
- An inspirational interview with a BEST/BENITA Study participant; and
- Updates about our Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and our member activities.

In the upcoming year our team will continue our research efforts to continue to better understand the many biological and non-biological factors that impact breast cancer disparities among young Black women. We also move forward with our commitment to continue to raise awareness about inherited breast cancer among the Black community in partnership with our esteemed Community Advisory Panel.

Best Wishes,

Susan T. Vadaparampil, PhD, MPH & Tuya Pal, MD, FACMG

B-GREAT Co-Directors

Research Updates:

We continue to be grateful to the many participants who have taken part in our study. Over the last 5 years, we have successfully recruited over 400 women to this study and provided them with genetic counseling and *BRCA* testing.

Our results have shown that over 12% of women with breast cancer diagnosed at age 50 or younger had a *BRCA* mutation detected, which is more than double what we had expected. This suggests that it may be appropriate to recommend *BRCA* testing in all Black women diagnosed with breast cancer at or below age 50, regardless of their family history.

Additionally, even though we know that genetic testing for inherited breast cancer is becoming more common, not all women are receiving testing in equal numbers. Women with private insurance and a higher household income were more likely to access genetic services, but the strongest factor was a referral from their healthcare provider. This tells us that raising awareness about the importance of inherited breast cancers among patients, as well as healthcare providers, is needed.

The real benefit from genetic testing comes from what is done to manage cancer risks based on the results. Patients who learn they carry a *BRCA* mutation can choose to have more breast cancer screening, preventative mastectomies and/or oophorectomies. Additionally, this knowledge can be shared with family members so they can also be proactive about managing their cancer risks. We continue to follow our research participants to better understand how learning about their *BRCA* carrier status may impact cancer risk management practices and family sharing (through our BENITA Study).

We thank the many of you who continue to fill out our surveys and speak to our research staff – your ongoing participation is critical to improve our understanding of follow-up care needs among high risk women in the Black community.

Ultimately, knowing your *BRCA* status can impact many aspects of cancer care from prevention to treatment. We need to ensure that underserved communities have better access to genetic testing services so that the tremendous advances in genetics and genomics benefit all women equally.

These new findings, which were recently reported in a couple of scientific journals, were only made possible by the many women who chose to contribute to our efforts.

References:

Pal T, et al. A high frequency of BRCA mutations in young black women with breast cancer residing in Florida. Cancer. 2015 Aug 19; PMID: 26287763

Cragun D et al. Factors associated with genetic counseling and BRCA testing in a population-based sample of young Black women with breast cancer. Breast Cancer and Treatment. May 2015;151:169-176; PMID: 25868867

BEST Study Participant Feature: Ms. Sharon Carver

My breast cancer journey began in April of 2008 with my second diagnosis occurring in October of 2010. I decided to participate in the BEST Study because there was no history of breast cancer in my family and I wanted to increase my knowledge about breast cancer. My advice for women who have been recently diagnosed with breast cancer would be to “Be your own advocate, don’t be afraid to let others be there and support you through this journey.” As a result of my breast cancer experience, I realized that life is precious. My journey was my journey and if it had not been for my trust and faith in God, I would have been a wreck! I would strongly recommend others to participate in research studies like the BEST Study. Each person's journey is different and your participation will give researchers valuable information to help the woman of color.



CAP Member SPOTLIGHT

Khaliah Fleming: Health Educator

The Tampa Bay Community Cancer Network at Moffitt Cancer Center has been awarded a National Cancer Institute 3-year administrative supplement. This will allow Khaliah, as a health educator, to integrate herself within various research and community efforts in order to better reach various communities with information, education, and resources.



Joyce T. Austin: Four time Breast Cancer and Kidney Cancer Survivor

During her recovery from breast cancer surgery in 2003, Ms. Austin authored a short story called “My Littlest Angel, Who made me laugh.” This children’s book inspired by her granddaughter, Taylor, helps young children understand why family and friends have been diagnosed and hospitalized as a result of cancer. She is a cancer research advocate and is involved with events that benefit research and educational resources.



CAP 2015 Events

- On January 8th, we hosted our 7th CAP Dinner at the Moffitt Screening and Prevention building in Tampa, FL. Members of our advisory panel were given a brief overview of our study. Members also took the time to share personal updates and accomplishments.
- On October 3rd, CAP Member Joyce Austin participated in a Breast Cancer Walk that included free mammogram screenings for 39 uninsured women at the Allen Temple AME Church in Tampa, FL.
- On October 3rd, CAP Member Gwendolyn Dawson participated in the Sparr Community Breast Cancer Walk held at St. Joseph AME Church and Antioch Baptist Church in Citra, FL.
- On October 17th, CAP Member Valerie Poindexter participated in the “Picture ME Pink: A Hattie McDaniel Breast Cancer Awareness Event”, hosted by Theta Upsilon Chapter, in conjunction with the Beta Kappa Sigma Tampa Alumnae Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. which was held at The University of South Florida Grand Ballroom in Tampa, FL.
- **For a listing of upcoming events please visit our B-GREAT website (www.bgreatinitiative.net) or our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BGREATInitiative)**

B-GREAT Team

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CAP Members

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