

Internet support available for breast cancer patients

Low-income African-American breast cancer patients in Wayne County will soon be able to get information and support 24 hours a day, seven days a week through an Internet-based breast cancer information and support system called CHESS (Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System).

Round-the-clock access is crucial: during research trials, almost half of those using the system did so between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

William Stengle, director of the Cancer Information Service, Midwest Region housed at the Barkay and Karmanos Cancer Institute, is one of the researchers tracking the project. "When you have a life-threatening illness, you have trouble sleeping until you can find an answer. Providing information and support through the Internet is a great way of getting information to patients at all hours of the day or night," he said.

Internet-based CHESS covers the full range of patient concerns, with information in a variety of formats. Patients have the ability to question experts and connect with other patients both through an online bulletin board and through the personal stories of other women who have faced breast cancer. Tools in the system let patients monitor their health, make decisions, and plan and carry out changes in their lives.

Loaning computers

Beginning in June 2001, all Detroit-area breast cancer patients will be able to access CHESS, but a special study, funded by the National Cancer Institute, will loan computers and free Internet access to 70 low-income African-American women who live in Wayne County. These women also will receive free training in using the system.

A partner project will recruit 50 rural women in Wisconsin, and both groups will be part of a study to determine the impact and effectiveness of CHESS on meeting patients' education and support needs.

Patients not eligible for a computer loan can call an 800 number to get a password and can use their own or public-site computers to access CHESS.

Ellen Jones, research coordinator for the project, says the system benefits all groups of

breast cancer patients. "Many people wonder whether women who have low incomes or less formal education will be interested in how to use computer systems, but past research on CHESS found that underserved women were frequent and enthusiastic users of the system. Often, they were the ones that found it most useful."

When recruiting begins in June, breast cancer patients can get a referral from their doctors, or they can call 1-800-KAR-MANOS (1-800-527-6268) or 1-800-4-CANCER and ask for Ellen Jones. Patients not eligible for the computer loan program can call 1-800-381-5481 to get a password for access to CHESS using their own computer.

CHESS was developed at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, by a team led by David Gustafson, Ph.D., Robert Hawkins, and Suzanne Pingree.

Controlled clinical trial evaluations have been funded by several federal agencies, including the National Cancer Institute, which is funding the current demonstration trial for low-income African Americans in Wayne County and low-income rural women in Wisconsin.

Botsford Hospital hosts job fair

Botsford General Hospital will host "Careercast," a mini job fair 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, June 26 in the main lobby of the hospital, 28050 Grand River Avenue, just west of Eight Mile Road in Farmington Hills.

Candidates for unit secretary, registered nurse, surgical technician, respiratory therapy

nurse, nurse assistant, polysomnograph technician and CRNA positions are encouraged to attend and learn more about career opportunities at Botsford. Bring your resume and enthusiasm. Qualified candidates can apply and be interviewed on the spot.

The Botsford Health Care Continuum is an integrated

system of care that includes Botsford General Hospital, the Botsford Physician Network, Community Emergency Medical Service, the Botsford Continuing Care Corporation and the Botsford Center for Health Improvement.

For more information, call Joan Harrison at (248) 471-8651.

Datebook

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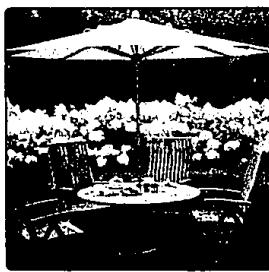
THYROID CANCER
The Thyroid Cancer Survivors Association-SE Michigan support group meets 7-8:30 p.m. the 4th Tuesday on the month in the

Gold Room of the Plymouth Public Library, 223 Main Street, Plymouth. Survivors, family, health-care professionals invited. Call (734) 397-2801.

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