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Early detection vital to winning breast cancer battle

Stanton~ A staggering 7,000 Michigan women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008, of which 1,000 are not expected to survive. When it comes to winning the fight against breast cancer early detection continues to be a critical factor. “I can’t stress enough the importance of routine check-ups and early detection,” said Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD). “Those hoping to avoid a cancer diagnosis can greatly increase their odds by conducting monthly breast self examinations and getting appropriate and timely screenings as directed by their doctor.”

MMDHD is leading the fight against deadly cancers by providing residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties free breast exams, mammograms, pelvic exams and pap smears to women who qualify through its Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP). The program is available to women age 40 to 64 with an annual income of \$25,525 for a one-person family or \$51,625 for a four-person family. Women diagnosed with cancer through the BCCCP may also be eligible to receive Medicaid for their cancer treatment.

MMDHD is also offering free breast screenings to uninsured and underinsured women age 40 to 64 in Montcalm County. The program is funded by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation with services provided by MMDHD and the Montcalm Community College Nursing Program, in collaboration with Spectrum Health.

In addition to being screened for breast cancer there are four other key ways a woman can reduce her risk of developing breast cancer: control your weight and exercise, know if your family has a history of breast cancer, find out the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy and limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

With regular screening breast cancer is more likely to be detected at an earlier stage, when it is most treatable. “As with any cancer, the sooner it is found the better chance for a cure,” said Dr. Graham. “There is a ninety-five percent survival rate in early, small breast cancers, but early detection is paramount.”

Don’t become a statistic. Call today to see if you qualify for either of these programs or to schedule an appointment at 989-831-3602 or visit www.mmdhd.org for more information.

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