WOMEN, CANCER, RACE, AND POVERTY:
RISK FACTORS NOBODY TELLS YOU

“Many factors are known to increase a woman's risk for a diagnosis of cancer. Examples of widely known risk factors are: smoking diet, genetics, and environmental carcinogens. But others -- especially poverty and race -are seldom publicized.”

Risk Factor #1: To Have A Low Income

♦ A woman who earns less than $15,000 and does not have private insurance is more likely to have a late diagnosis of cancer. In general, late diagnosis is directly linked to higher mortality rates. Because women are more likely than men to be poor and more likely to hold marginal jobs, they are more likely not to have health insurance. By one estimate, uninsured women (without Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance) are 66% more likely to die of breast cancer than women with private insurance. In the U.S. at least 36 million people are uninsured. Uninsured women are less likely to receive hospital care.

♦ Inner-city and rural low-income women often lack access to basic health care, since federal funds are being steadily withdrawn from the clinics that once served them,

Risk Factor #2: To Be A Woman of Color

Racial discrimination has two direct effects on the health of women of color.

♦ Women of color are more likely to live and work in areas with high levels of toxic waste and carcinogens. This is environmental racism and it increases their risk of cancer.

♦ Women of color are also more likely to receive late diagnosis, poor treatment, and poor health results because of racial discrimination in the larger society and within the medical system. White women get breast cancer at higher rates than African American, Hispanic, or Native American women, yet relative survival rates for these women of color are lower than for white women. For Native American and African American women, both the incidence of cervical cancer and associated death rates are higher than for white women.

Risk Factor #3: To Lack Access to Health Care

♦ Because of the homophobia of many doctors, lesbians sometimes avoid the medical system.

♦ Immigrant women also make limited use of health care in order to avoid involvement with official systems.

♦ Women who have low levels of education or who do not speak English often find it difficult to obtain information necessary to safeguard their own health.
THESE RISK FACTORS ARE CAUSED BY SOCIAL CONDITIONS THAT WE CAN CHANGE!

LET'S ORGANIZE TO DEFEND WOMEN'S LIVES AND HEALTH!

WHAT WE NEED

♦ Universal health insurance -- the first necessary step toward access to health care for all women

♦ Greater awareness within the medical system of cultural and language differences among women of different races, ethnicities, nationalities and sexual orientations

♦ An end to environmental racism to ensure safer work and neighborhood environments for all women, especially poor women and women of color

Documentation:


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