

**STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE HENRY A. WAXMAN
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
HEARING ON THE ROLE OF EARLY DETECTION AND COMPLEMENTARY AND
ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE IN WOMEN'S CANCERS
JUNE 10, 1999**

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that we are having a hearing on such an important issue. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women. Cervical cancer will kill close to 5,000 women this year. At least another 20,000 women will die this year from uterine and ovarian cancers.

The real issues before us are how can we safely and effectively prevent, detect, and treat cancers? And how can we make sure that all women have access to good treatments and to accurate information about their treatment choices?

Proper screening techniques can, and have, lowered mortality rates for breast and cervical cancer. We must continue to work hard to ensure that women have access to the screening techniques currently available, and we must continue to educate women about the importance of being screened for these cancers. But this is not enough. We also have to make sure that health care providers follow-up with women, notify them of their test results, and encourage them to return for further tests, if necessary. We also have to make sure that quality treatments are available to all women.

At the same time we need to continue to research better ways to detect cancers. Currently, there is no good test for ovarian cancer, the fifth leading cause of cancer death among women in the United States. And while mammography has been proven to reduce the number of breast cancer deaths in women over 50 years old by at least 30%, it has not been as effective in reducing cancer deaths among younger women. We need to continue to research screening techniques.

We should also be looking at ways to prevent cancer. In 1993 I sponsored legislation that mandated a study of why certain localities were experiencing elevated incidents of breast cancer and elevated mortality rates. Studies such as these are important tools in understanding why women get cancers, and how to prevent cancer.

We need to concentrate our efforts on developing safe and effective ways to prevent cancer, to detect cancer, and to cure cancer, and we need to make sure that these therapies are available to all women. No one is served by battling over the relative merits of alternative versus traditional medicine. Instead, our goal should be to develop the most safe and effective therapies possible, regardless of how they are classified.

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