

Denise Dunn

From: Leona Barrington
Sent: Wednesday, August 09, 2006 2:01 PM
To: Executive Team Eastern Health May 2005; Heather Predham; Sharon Smith; Pam Elliott; Nebojsa Denic; Dr. Kara Laing; Terry Gulliver
Cc: Susan Bonnell; Elizabeth Strange-Hollett; dboone@smss.com
Subject: ER/PR -Mrytle Lewis Media coverage

The attached Letter to the Editor appeared in both The Charter and The Compass this week.



**Eastern
Health**

Leona Barrington
Media Relations Officer
Corporate Communications
T: 777-1339
C: 728-7935
F: 777-1344
leona.barrington@easternhealth.ca

OPINION

The Charter • August 7, 2006 • Page 7

Women want blood test screening for breast cancer

Dear Editor,

This has reference to the recent coverage in the news media of a Newfoundland woman whose breast were surgically removed as a result of a misdiagnosis by Eastern Health Authority, one of a number of individual cases that were misdiagnosed by them.

This woman appeared this week on a local television station with her lawyer. She spoke about pressing her class action lawsuit against Eastern Health.

Earlier, Eastern Health confirmed that there were problems with a number of pathology results, from a testing of 1,000 women in 1997. The problem was described as more of a quality control matter, with testing the issue, as opposed to a perceived need for a second opinion for these women facing the prospect of a diag-

nosis of breast cancer.

This poor woman in question was advised seven years later that the diagnosis, which she had been given seven years earlier, was wrong. She learned that her breasts were removed without necessity, as she had only pre-cancerous cells and not cancer.

The woman cried as she spoke of the emotional devastation resulting from the surgery that removed her breasts. She spoke determinedly of her expressed intention to carry forward with the class action lawsuit against Eastern Health, with a group of other women who were also misdiagnosed.

Are women really being asked to accept that there is no need for a second opinion, even after experiencing this kind of misdiagnosis for breast cancer? I would like to point out that the misdiagnosis that resulted in this

radical treatment, i.e. removal of both breasts, would be unnecessary, if simple blood tests for breast cancer were made available to women today. A simple blood test could clearly confirm the existence of pre-cancerous cells or actual cancer cells in the breast and would have saved these women the loss of their breasts. Why will our health care system not allow women to have this second opinion?

If men are using a simple blood test for prostate cancer, why must women have to go through these kind of nightmare situations?

The second opinion could conceivably save the health care system, millions of dollars in health care and also, considerable savings from present and future lawsuits against Eastern Health. There is every good reason to hold the health care system fully responsible for each and

every case of breast cancer that is misdiagnosed.

Apart from the dollar savings to the health care system, there is the reality that, if breast cancer were diagnosed accurately and sooner, women would not have to suffer the loss of their breasts because of misdiagnosis by health care specialists, using what could well be ineffective and outdated digital imaging, that was originally devised by the military, as a means of surveillance in the 20th century.

The breast, that perfectly epitomizes the feminine in the world, should not be victimized in this fashion, the basis of mammography machinery devised in the 20th century. Women have had to sacrifice their sons to war for thousands of years and still, into the 21st century. Our health care system is ask-

ing today's woman, the bearer and giver of life, to sacrifice the female breast, that sustains human life from the moment of birth, — to military technology, and without recourse to a second opinion!!

This usury of women, through this misdiagnosis of breast cancer and the violence that is brought upon women's lives through the loss of their breasts, is the result of using outdated, inadequate military technology devised by the military in the 20th century, and without the second opinion that could be provided by the use of blood screening. It, and the waging of war in the world, remains scourges on the lives of women in the 21st century. Both scourges have to be stopped in the world, before it is too late for humanity.

Elaine Murray
Placentia