

Turn The Light Off For Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is a prevalent disease that affects approximately 1 in 8 women in their lifetime. This is likely a fact that many patients will hear repeatedly during the month of October as we recognize National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM). The opportunities this month represents extend far beyond wearing pink ribbons and raising money for treatment. As NBCAM, the month of October offers an important opportunity to educate your patients about the many risk factors for breast cancer and what they can do EVERY day to reduce their risks.

In the June 2012 edition of *Menopause International*, UCLA researchers reported their findings on the pathophysiology of PMS and premenstrual dysphoric disorder as it relates to neurotransmitters. Clinically it has been well documented that premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PDD) are triggered by hormonal events ensuing after ovulation. Excerpted from this article's abstract it is reported:

Melatonin has been demonstrated to have oncostatic effects in various types of cancer; however in breast cancer it is capable of disrupting the estrogen-mediated cellular pathways and reducing the number of estrogen receptors in addition to having antioxidant and immune modulating effects and influencing oncogene expression to induce apoptosis. The longer a woman's history of working a night shift, the greater overall risk she has for breast cancer. Much of this data may be extrapolated and applied to all patients

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who have compromised melatonin production including those who have disrupted sleep patterns due to excess cortisol production in the evenings and those whose work or social behaviors keep them awake into the night. In fact, there is an association between women with the brightest bedrooms and an increased risk for breast cancer. This problem is especially relevant for patients who may be staring at a bright light source such as a computer or television, as the enzyme involved in the production of melatonin is suppressed by blue light in the 460-480 nm spectrum. Discussion about the controllable risk factors for breast cancer including the importance of a sleep wake cycle consistent with darkness, modulating stress, monitoring cortisol production in the evening and reducing bright light before bed is an important message that you can provide to your patients this October.

Resources:

- Wang XS, Travis RC, Reeves G, Green J, Allen NE, Key TJ, Roddam AW, Beral V. Characteristics of the Million Women Study participants who have and have not worked at night. *Scand J Work Environ Health*. 2012 Jul 9. pii: 3313.
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- Schernhammer ES, Laden F, Speizer FE, et al. Rotating Night Shifts and Risk of Breast Cancer in Women Participating in the Nurses' Health Study *J Natl Cancer Inst* 2001; 93:15638
- Hill SM, Collins A, Kiefer TL. The modulation of oestrogen receptoralpha activity by melatonin in MCF 7 human breast cancer cells. *Eur J Cancer* 2000;36(Suppl 4):1178.
- Lissoni P, Barni S, Mandala M, et al. Decreased toxicity and increased efficacy of cancer chemotherapy using the pineal hormone melatonin in metastatic solid tumor patients with poor clinical status. *Eur J Cancer* 1999;35:168892.
- Navara KJ, Nelson RJ (October 2007). "The dark side of light at night: physiological, epidemiological, and ecological consequences". *J. Pineal Res.* 43 (3): 21524.

For more information on the prevention and treatment of breast cancer, join us on October 16th for our next webinar: Beyond Awareness Prevention and Treatments for Breast Cancer. [Click here to register.](#)

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