

Press Release

Hong Kong's first "*Breast Cancer Risk Assessment*" service launched by the Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation

(December 10, 2013, Hong Kong) The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation (HKBCF) today launched the first "Breast Cancer Risk Assessment" service in Hong Kong. This brand new service enables women to better understand their individual breast cancer risk level to facilitate their adoption of appropriate preventive measures, such as taking preventive drugs.

According to the latest figures released by the Hospital Authority's Hong Kong Cancer Registry, 3,419 new cases of breast cancer were diagnosed in 2011, representing an increase of 13% compared with 2010 (3,014 new cases). One in every 17 women in Hong Kong (compared with one in every 19 women in 2010) will fall victim to breast cancer in her lifetime.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in Hong Kong. However, a majority of local women still do not understand the risks of breast cancer and the importance of regular breast screening. The data and analysis from the HKBCF's Hong Kong Breast Cancer Registry Report No.5 revealed that patients whose breast cancers were detected through regular screening were generally diagnosed at earlier stages when the tumour size is smaller, thus reduces the chances of a total mastectomy and chemotherapy treatment.

Mrs Eliza Fok, Chairman of the HKBCF and a breast cancer survivor shares her personal experience.

"From personal experience I can share that the extent and intensity of suffering encountered during breast cancer treatment for the disease diagnosed at a later stage is much greater than when detected at an earlier stage. I urge all women to realize the threat of breast cancer and to commit to regular screening as a means of prevention," she said.

Since its establishment in 2011, the HKBCF's Breast Health Centre (BHC) has provided clinical breast examination and mammography screening services to approximately 12,000 women - 208 of whom were subsequently diagnosed with breast cancer. Of those diagnosed, 3.9% were symptomatic cases and 0.5% non-symptomatic. Dr. Wai-ka Hung, Council Member of the HKBCF said, "The incidence rate of breast cancer in local women aged 40 or above increases with age. The greater the age, the higher the risk of breast cancer is observed. The HKBCF highly recommends women aged 20 and above to familiarize themselves with risks for breast cancer and start performing breast self-examinations. We recommend women aged 40 and above to perform monthly breast self-examinations as well as biannual clinical breast examinations and mammography screening."

In Hong Kong, body check-up services for women generally do not include an assessment on breast cancer risk levels. Dr. Polly Cheung, Founder of the HKBCF said, "Women with different risk levels of breast cancer should adopt different types of preventive measures. For women having average and moderate risk level, they are recommended to follow the HKBCF's breast screening suggestions. For women facing high and very high risk level, they may also consider taking SERMs (Selective Estrogen Receptor Modulators) for breast cancer prevention. Women have to familiarize themselves with their risk levels to adopt a course of action that facilitates early detection of breast cancer."

SERMs imitate the function of estrogen and help to maintain healthy bone structure, they enhance bone density and inhibit the effect of estrogen on the breast, thereby reducing the risk of breast cancer.

Effective today the BHC will be providing the "Breast Cancer Risk Assessment" service during which medical staff will assess the breast cancer risk levels of individual women and make appropriate preventive recommendations. High risk cases will be referred to and followed up by a doctor.

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