

**Introduction, Goals, and Transdisciplinary Nature of BCERC**

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The Breast Cancer and the Environment Centers (BCERC) are now beginning their fourth of seven years of operation. This is the third annual meeting hosted by one of the Centers, and on behalf of the four participating centers and our NIH sponsors we welcome you to Berkeley, California. Over the next day and a half you will hear presentations of some of the first results from the BCERC scientists and community advocates as well as talks from other eminent scientists invited to speak on related topics of interest. We will also have opportunities for advocates and other community members to delve into some of the scientific findings presented and to discuss them with study investigators and other experts.

The goal of the centers is to study the impact of prenatal-to-adult environmental exposures that may predispose a woman to breast cancer. BCERC is investigating mammary gland development in animals and young girls to determine vulnerability to environmental agents in the pre-pubertal period that may influence breast cancer development in adulthood. The overall outcomes of the BCERC are to develop public health messages designed to educate young girls and women who are at high risk of breast cancer about the role(s) of specific environmental stressors in breast cancer and how to reduce exposures to them.

In implementing this research across the four-center network, BCERC investigators draw on their own and the skills of colleagues in multiple disciplines including genetics, cell biology, pediatrics, endocrinology, toxicology, epidemiology, biostatistics, and community advocacy. We refer to this kind of scientific approach as ‘transdisciplinary’ because it strives to integrate research methods, multiple levels of analysis, and science around a common conceptual model to produce new knowledge that is greater than the sum of its parts. This meeting will demonstrate our multiple and increasing integrated approaches to the problem of understanding environmental influences on puberty that may lead breast cancer in adult life.