Long Distance Learning on Biomonitoring Topics: EnviroCancer Connections Project

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Objective: Provide community cancer and environmental groups in New York State (NYS) with: the latest information on the breast cancer risk of environmental chemicals, and opportunities for dialogue and open discussion on chosen topics of interest, using long distance learning (LDL) technology.

Methods: NYSBCSEN members served as project partners by choosing the workshop topics, designing the format of the workshops, and agreeing to serve as facilitators. Three viewing sites, New York City Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) office, Ithaca-Cornell campus, and Voorheesville CCE office (Albany area), were linked for live video electronic transmission of the educational presentations and discussion sessions. Participants provided feedback via an evaluation questionnaire.

Results: The partnership between Cornell-BCERF and the NYSBCSEN resulted in two successful workshops held in February 2006. NYSBCSEN members chose to have a workshop on biomonitoring, and to have a second workshop on current efforts to determine the breast cancer risk of endocrine disrupting chemicals. Both three-hour LDL workshops included several mini-talks presented by Suzanne Snedeker followed by extensive time for participants to dialogue on the topics of interest. Participants included nine groups from the NYSBCSEN, other health educators, legislators, and NYS agency personnel. Examples of evaluation results include: participants agreed they were better able to understand research findings on how biomonitoring can be used to measure chemical exposures in humans; how biomonitoring can be used as a part of public health tracking programs; how environmental chemicals can act like endocrine disruptors; planned to share information presented with members of the breast cancer and environmental community; would use this information in their professional work; found that the LDL format was a productive way to interact with members of cancer and environmental communities; and provided a way to build relationships between scientists and community advocates. Follow-up included: providing participants with a CD of slides, handouts and transcripts; and posting educational resources to the Cornell-BCERF website <http://envirocancer.cornell.edu>.

Conclusion: Multi-site LDL is a viable method for cancer and environmental advocates to explore and dialogue on emerging issues concerning the breast cancer risk of environmental chemicals.

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