

Tri-Valley Herald (Pleasanton, CA)

November 9, 2003 Sunday

Faith's memory holds town hall; KTVU reporter Fancher loses battle against breast cancer, but her efforts to break down racial, eth- nic disparities go on

BYLINE: By Rebecca Vesely, STAFF WRITER

SECTION: LOCAL & REGIONAL NEWS

LENGTH: 660 words

DATELINE: OAKLAND

Several months ago, while KTVU Fox reporter **Faith Fancher** was in the hospital undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer, she was asked to kick off a town hall on disparities in disease care scheduled for November.

Fancher immediately checked her calendar, determined when she would have a break in chemotherapy treatment and agreed to host the event.

"She was figuring out how she would pull herself together to get here," said Rosy Chu, community affairs director for KTVU FOX Channel 2.

Fancher died on Oct. 19 after a high-profile six-year battle with breast cancer, still determined to break down racial and ethnic disparities of the disease.

The town hall went on as planned Saturday morning at Summit Hospital in Oakland, though with much discussion of Fancher and her contributions to the cause.

The forum was hosted by Alta Bates Summit's Ethnic Health Institute and Markstein Cancer Center, the American Cancer Society and AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals.

"We'll be working to carry forward Faith's vision and realize her goals of ending disparities in care," said Dr. Carol D'Onofrio, board member of the Alta Bates Summit Medical Center and longtime breast cancer researcher.

D'Onofrio presented research she compiled from state and Bay Area data outlining obstacles to breast cancer detection and treatment among certain ethnic and racial groups.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis among all women in the Bay Area, and white women have a higher rate of diagnosis than women of other races. However, African-American women are more likely to die from the disease in the Bay Area and nationwide.

"Survival has improved for all races, but survival rates for African Americans today are worse than for whites in the first data period of 1974 to 1976," D'Onofrio said.

Alameda and San Mateo counties have the highest death rates of Latinas with breast cancer among the six Bay Area counties, according to the Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry. There were 20.4 deaths per 100,000 Latinas in Alameda County and 20.9 deaths per 100,000 Latina women in San Mateo County. Comparably, San Francisco County had 11.7 deaths per 100,000 Latinas.

Faith's memory holds town hall;KTVU reporter Fancher loses battle against breast cancer, but her efforts to break down racial, ethnic disparities go on Tri-Valley Herald (Pleasanton, CA) November 9, 2003 Sunday

Marta Borbon-Ehling, a registered nurse with the Latina Breast Health Outreach Project at Alta Bates Summit said that only about 70 percent of Latina women over 50 come in for mammograms. Lack of health insurance, language barriers and the traditional homemaker role of older Latinas are barriers to care.

The most rapidly increasing incidence of breast cancer in the region is among Korean women. Many Korean women work in small, family owned businesses so they don't qualify for public assistance, but cannot afford to buy private insurance, said Dr. Sue Chan, medical director for Asian Health Services in Oakland.

"A huge, huge barrier is funding services -- we need total access for people," Chan said.

Dr. Lisa Bailey, an oncology surgeon at Alta Bates Summit, relayed the story of a Korean woman who she recently treated. The woman had a five centimeter tumor in her breast and noticed the tumor a year before seeking medical attention.

Reaching women at the earliest stages of breast cancer is a huge problem among all racial and ethnic groups, except white women, research has found. This contributes to higher death rates among African-American, Latino and Asian-American women. Alameda County had the most breast cancer deaths among the six Bay Area counties from 1996 to 2000, but not the highest incidence of the disease, D'Onofrio said.

"Never ignore a lump, no matter how small," warned Zora Kramer Brown, a breast cancer survivor, activist and author, whose three sisters and mother all were diagnosed with the disease.

This is one area where Fancher worked to close the gap. Her Friends of Faith organization has raised more than \$500,000 to give low-income women access to mammograms.

Contact Rebecca Vesely at rvesely@angnewspapers.com

LOAD-DATE: November 9, 2003

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Copyright 2003 MediaNews Group, Inc. and ANG Newspapers