



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FIRST-EVER NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG BREAST CANCER  
PATIENTS, SURVIVORS AND MEDICAL EXPERTS**

~ In Response to Survey Showing Lack of Information and  
Ill-Fitting Treatment for Pre-Menopausal Women with Breast Cancer ~

**Toronto, October 9, 2007** – Young breast cancer patients and survivors from across Canada will join various nationally acclaimed breast cancer experts and keynote speakers in Toronto for the first-ever National Conference for Young Women Living with Breast Cancer. Responding to data from a Canadian Breast Cancer Network survey of women with breast cancer under age 45 that showed an information gap and ill-targeted treatment for and about women in this age group, the conference is the first of its kind in Canada and will be held at The Downtown Sheraton on November 2 - 4, 2007.

“The bottom line it is that all the information that we have is geared to women over 50,” said one survey respondent from Vancouver. “Because I was young..., they didn’t know what to do with me,” commented Tracy Guthrie.

**MOST CURRENT MEDICAL & PSYCHOSOCIAL INFO. ON BREAST CANCER IN YOUNG WOMEN**  
Rethink Breast Cancer and The Canadian Breast Cancer Network are proud to co-present the distinctive three-day national educational gathering dedicated to addressing the unique needs of young women living with breast cancer. With speakers including Dr. Marla Shapiro, Libby Znaimer and Beverly Thompson participants will discover the most current medical and psychosocial information on breast cancer in pre-menopausal women from various experts in the health industry.

“It is crucial that women dealing with breast cancer have access to the information and support they require,” said Dr. Marla Shapiro, breast cancer survivor and author of *Life in the Balance: My Journey with Breast Cancer*.

Participants may choose from more than 36 educational and informative workshops and plenary sessions reflecting the diverse interests and needs of participants including sexuality and intimacy, fertility, treatment and recovery, survivorship, personal appearance and breast reconstruction, and mental health and spirituality. Through this conference and the programs and services Rethink Breast Cancer provide, young women can network with others like them and access medical and quality-of-life information relevant for their lives.

With the bulk of breast cancer resources designed for women over the age of fifty, it is difficult for young women diagnosed with breast cancer to find the support that they require. Women under the age of 45 are at a different stage in their lives and have a unique experience with breast cancer; they will face obstacles and many issues that their post-menopausal counterparts do not. Young children, careers, dating, sexuality, and fertility concerns – these are all issues that have been overlooked in the past.

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“The conference is designed to raise awareness of the particular issues that young women face when battling breast cancer and to provide accurate and current information that is relevant to them and their supporters,” said MJ DeCoteau, Executive Director of Rethink Breast Cancer.

#### **‘NOTHING FIT ME’ SURVEY BY CANADIAN BREAST CANCER NETWORK**

Women surveyed had similar issues to other breast cancer survivors, however, they also noted how being ‘young’ seemed to present several barriers to effective diagnosis, treatment and after-care. The overall theme that captures the way that these women feel about information, support and programs/services offered once diagnosed and treated with breast cancer is the title of the survey, “Nothing Fit Me”. Some additional feedback from the surveyed women:

- Women felt generic information about breast cancer was inappropriate for their age group and that health providers didn’t know enough about young women to provide accurate information.
- Within the cancer care system women spoke about 'not fitting' into the profile of a typical breast cancer patient. 'Ill-fitting' experiences were reported at diagnosis, throughout treatment, and at follow-up.
- Distress about delay in diagnosis was compounded by women's concern that their oncologists were making treatment decisions without substantial research by which to measure the impact of those treatments on pre-menopausal women.
- Young women, especially single moms and child-free women, described the utter silence surrounding sexual dysfunction, how to understand the sexual changes to their bodies, and how to feel sexual again with others.

Interviews were conducted with 70 women who were diagnosed with breast cancer before the age of 45 years and were between one to five years post-diagnosis. Two day-long consultations were held in each of the following five cities: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax. The research was analyzed and completed in 2003. The full report is available at: <http://www.cbcn.ca/documents/pdf/NothingFitMe-ENGLISH.pdf>.

#### **BREAST CANCER AND YOUNG WOMEN**

Although breast cancer in young women accounts for a small percentage of all cases, the impact of the disease is widespread. Breast cancer is by far the most common cancer in young adults and the leading cause of cancer death in women ages 15 – 24. Twenty-three (23) per cent of all women with breast cancer are below the age of 50 (Canadian Cancer Society, 2001). Additionally, the disease in young women can be more aggressive (Swanson & Lin, 1994; Xiong et al., 2001). However, primary health care physicians can increase the gravity of the situation for young women by doubting the seriousness of breast lumps and delaying diagnosis and treatment (Menon et al., 1992). According to the Canadian Cancer Society, an estimated 22,300 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year and 5,300 will die of the disease.

#### **ABOUT RETHINK BREAST CANCER**

Rethink Breast Cancer is an innovative charity that reaches out to young people concerned about and affected by breast cancer. By taking a breakthrough approach to all aspects of breast cancer – medical research, support, public awareness and fundraising – Rethink Breast Cancer is expanding support for the cause. Rethink has brought together some of Canada’s leading scientists to develop a much needed research program focused on cultivating the talent of new young researchers. To find out more about Rethink Breast Cancer, visit [www.rethinkbreastcancer.com](http://www.rethinkbreastcancer.com).

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**ABOUT THE CANADIAN BREAST CANCER NETWORK**

The Canadian Breast Cancer Network is a national network that acts as a link between all organizations and individuals concerned about breast cancer. The survivor-directed group is representative for the concerns of all Canadian's affected by breast cancer and those at risk. The network also works to promote education and awareness about breast cancer, as well as support to Canadian's affected by the disease. For more information about The Canadian Breast Cancer Network, please visit [www.cbcn.ca](http://www.cbcn.ca).

This Conference is made possible by the generous support of our sponsors including The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation-Ontario Chapter and Cure Foundation. For a complete list of our sponsors please visit [www.youngwomensconference.ca](http://www.youngwomensconference.ca)

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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**Notes to Editors:** Members of the media who would like to attend the conference should contact Denise Dias at (416) 920-0980 ext. 225 or [denise@rethinkbreastcancer.com](mailto:denise@rethinkbreastcancer.com), or Chantale Lavoie at 1-800-685-8820 ext. 223 or [clavoie@cbcnc.ca](mailto:clavoie@cbcnc.ca).

For more information on the National Conference for Young Women Living with Breast Cancer, visit [www.youngwomensconference.ca](http://www.youngwomensconference.ca)