

# 'Knock on Door' campaign spreads cancer awareness

*Breast cancer in haredi women lower than average, but exercise and obesity affect survival rates*

• By JUDY SIEGEL

Although ultra-Orthodox women are less likely to contract breast cancer because they give birth at young ages and have many children, their risk of the tumor returning is higher and their survival rate lower than national-religious and secular women, the Israel Cancer Association said Monday.

The ICA released new statistics on various cancers ahead of its 53rd annual Knock on the Door fundraising campaign to begin next week. The month of October is dedicated to raising breast cancer awareness.

Some of the most surprising findings concerned haredi women.

As haredi women get little or no information about breast cancer from the ultra-Orthodox media, they depend on their physicians more for information and said in a survey that "prayer" was an important factor in recovering from the disease. But the fact that haredi women tend to be overweight or obese and don't exercise much or at all brings down the changes for recovery and avoiding the cancer's return – compared to other Jewish women.

In addition, although mammography rates among haredi women are rising and reaching that of other Jewish women, even when ultra-Orthodox women know of a family history of breast cancer, they often do not go for genetic counseling.

President Shimon Peres will receive ICA representatives at the President's Residence and is expected to make his own donation on Wednesday, October 9, and a seminar on breast cancer will be held at Kfar Hamaccabiah on October 28.

Other data included the fact that breast cancer rates are stable among Jewish and Arab women, while mortality rates from the disease are on a decline among both groups. Compared to other OECD countries, Israel is in fourth place among those with a high rate of breast cancer, following Denmark, Belgium, Ireland and Hungary. A total of 79 percent of breast cancer is diagnosed in women over the age of 50, with somewhat lower rates among Arabs and Jews.

Nearly 19,500 Israeli women are living with breast cancer; either they have recovered or are still fighting it with medical treatment. Survival rates over five years are around 79 percent.

There are 200,000 people who have recovered from all types of cancer living in the country.

Tzvi Neta, head of the Automotive Equipment Group in Tel Aviv and a cancer survivor himself, will be chairman of this year's campaign. He said at a press conference that the ICA's income comes solely from the public, as the voluntary organization gets no government money.

Thousands of school pupils will visit homes and knock on doors to collect donations on October 14. Contributions can also be made at the ICA website, its 70 branches around the country and other locations. Neta said that as a third grader, he himself went around to collect money and that his father established a charity to raise money for medical research and the treatment of patients.

As for pancreatic cancer, which is the third most common malignancy among Israeli men and is the fourth most common cancer of 20 OECD countries for both men and women. Israeli mortality rates from it are number two in the world, after Uruguay for men and fourth for women.

The ICA also reported the discovery of a "new genetic mutation" that is likely to influence the efficacy and treatment of breast cancer victims. It will be published in a few days in the journal *Cancer Research*.

The government has established a new data center on electro-magnetic radiation, headed by Sheba Medical Center Prof. Sigal Sidetzky, to assess dangers from cellular phones and other electronic devices.



הקש בדלת  
של האגודה למלחמה בסרטן

THE 'KNOCK ON THE DOOR' campaign poster.  
(Courtesy ICA)