

Preventing and Curing

Students should become aware of disease that claims one of every nine women in U.S.

BY AMANDA PALM
The Battalion

according to statistics by the American Cancer Society:

By the end of 1999 —

- There will be 175,000 new cases of breast cancer in women in America
- 43,000 of those women will die from breast cancer

This means —

- Breast cancer will be diagnosed every three minutes
- Breast cancer will claim a life every twelve minutes
- As many as 2,317 current female Texas A&M students will eventually die from cancer

"My mom was like super woman. She was a fireball." Geoff Spahr, a junior marketing major, was a freshman in high school when his mom, Mary Jo, told him she had breast cancer. His parents were divorced, and he and his older sister were living with his mother.

The breast cancer was caught in an early stage, and treatment began immediately. "I took her to all of her treatments," Spahr said. "It sucked, but I didn't know the impact this would have on my life at the time. She had chemo, radiation, homeopathic therapy — everything. Sometimes it seemed like the treatments were hurting her more than the therapy."

Spahr said he did not realize how serious things were until the effects of his mother's treatment began to show.

"The doctors were trying a new kind of chemo, and told her she may not lose her hair," he said. "But she did, and then I realized my mom was really sick."

A double mastectomy, the surgical removal of both breasts, was required for Spahr's mother to prevent further spread of the cancer. But the breast cancer metastasized from her breast into her lymph nodes and, finally, into her liver.

"She was really positive, and I thought the same way she did," he said. "About a month before she died, I realized she probably wasn't going to make it. That's when she sat me down and told me she wasn't sure she was going to beat it."

Spahr's mother battled with cancer for three years. On April 9, 1996, the disease took her life.

"The day before she died, I had a baseball game, and I didn't go to the hospital because she was doing really well," he said. "My grandpa stayed with her that night, and around midnight he called and told us to come to the hospital right away. We stayed with her all night."

"The next morning she was doing really bad. My sister and my dad and I went to get breakfast and it was almost like she was waiting for us. We came back to the room, and my sister went inside. I was waiting in the hall. Then I went into the room about five minutes later, and I was holding her hand when she passed away."

The American Cancer Society estimates by the end of 1999 there will be 175,000 new cases of breast cancer in women, accompanied with 43,300 deaths directly attributable to breast cancer. After lung cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer found in American women.

Peter Gray, St. Joseph's Regional Cancer Center director, said approximately 15,000 of the women in the Bryan-College Station area, including college-aged women, will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. Of those, 4,000 will die from the disease.

Gray said the center uses four methods to treat cancer: surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and hormone therapy.

"We combine all modalities [different approaches to treatment] because that is a woman's best hope," he said. "We are better than the nation in terms of how we treat breast cancer."

The degree of breast cancer is noted by stages. Stages of cancer range from stage zero to stage four or five, as determined by the development of the cancer. The earlier stage the cancer is in, the better chance a woman has to survive it.

"If it's found in stage zero or one, our experience has been over 97 percent of women are still alive after five years," Gray said. "If caught in stage three or stage four, there is a worse prognosis."

Risk factors have been identified to help women determine if they are at a greater risk for breast cancer.

Risk factors include increasing age, a family history of breast cancer, "breast cancer" genes, an early age of first menstruation and advanced age during their first pregnancy.

The American Cancer Society says early detection of a possible tumor improves a woman's chances that breast cancer can be diagnosed and treated successfully.

Though college-aged women are not at high risk for breast cancer, the American Cancer Society suggests women between the ages of 20 and 39 have a clinical breast examination once every three years.

After the age of 40, women should have an annual mammogram.

All women over the age of 20 should perform monthly breast self-examinations to check for abnormal breast shape or lumps in the breast.

It has been three years since Spahr's mother's death, and he said people are still amazed at how well he handled his mother's fight with breast cancer.

"People always say they don't know how I did it, that if it was them, they wouldn't have been strong enough," he said. "It's not like I had a choice. There was nothing I could do about it. I just had to deal with it."

"My mom was really strong and she worked up until the end and didn't let it slow her down. I always admired her strength. It gives me the drive to do better."

PHOTO BY BRADLEY ATCHISON



Log on today for your chance to win a spring break getaway!

exercise your right to a better you.

Now you can get your body in-line, on-line at gymamerica.com. Log on to this totally free website today and get a customized workout and diet program tailored specifically to your health and fitness goals. Plus, take advantage of expert advice, daily health and fitness updates, animated demonstrations, technique tips and official workouts from professional athletes. This is your full-ride scholarship to a better you.

Join the gymamerica team.
For more information on how you can be an on-campus rep call 1-888-379-5333.



free customized workouts for every body at www.gymamerica.com/aggies

HOWDY AGS!

COME GET "MAROONED OUT" WITH

UCS

IT'S UNIVERSAL COMPUTER SYSTEMS TAILGATE PARTY IN A TENT!

All our Ag Alumni want to help share in the AG SPIRIT as we BEAT THE HELL OUTTA KANSAS!

Who:	UCS and YOU
Where:	Duncan Field
When:	Saturday, October 16, 1999 9:30 a.m. - Noon
What:	BEVO Brisket & SOONER Sausage
Why:	Because we're a fun place to work!
How:	Stop by on your way to the game

Come win Maroon T-Shirts and Yell the Ags on to Victory!