

OKLAHOMA CARES REACHES OUT TO LOW INCOME WOMEN TO IMPROVE CANCER PROGNOSIS

State-funded program expands access to cancer diagnosis and treatment

Public Health Problem

- In Oklahoma, over 500 women die every year from breast or cervical cancer.
- Prompt diagnosis and treatment can reduce this death rate but uninsured women often lack access to these services that could improve their prognosis.

Program

- The Oklahoma Legislature recognized the critical need to provide uninsured women with breast and cervical cancer screening and treatment services.
- The legislature passed a funding bill directing the Oklahoma State Department of Health Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, and the Cherokee and Kaw Nations Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Programs to work with breast and cervical cancer advocates in assuring greater access to program services; over \$35,000 in support for the program to date.
- *Oklahoma Cares* was created with this funding and is providing assistance to low income, uninsured Oklahoma women meeting eligibility guidelines who have an abnormal breast or cervical test result. Through *Oklahoma Cares* these women obtain access to Medicaid coverage of diagnosis and treatment services for breast or cervical cancer, receiving a full scope of Medicaid benefits until they no longer need cancer treatment. The *Take Charge!* outreach effort is expanding the network to previously non-funded providers so that more women have access to the services they need. There are now more than eight hundred certified screening providers throughout the state. Other services provided include transportation and a patient advocate phone line.

Impact

- Allocation of state funds has expanded program features covered by federal breast and cervical cancer funding to reach more of the group of women ages 19 – 65 years without insurance coverage who would not be likely to receive screening or treatment without the program.
- Screening rates have improved by about fifteen percent for low income or uninsured women fifty and older which has likely increased the early detection of these cancers. Over nine thousand women have been served by the program and over a thousand have received treatment for cancer or pre-cancerous conditions.

Contact

Adeline M. Yerkes
Oklahoma State Department of Health
405-271-4072
adeliney@health.ok.gov

