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### **October Is Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, marking the 16<sup>th</sup> year of a nationwide effort to increase awareness of the disease and urge early detection efforts. Since the program began in 1985, mammography rates have more than doubled for women age 50 and older and breast cancer deaths have declined each year since 1992.

"This is exciting progress but there are still women who do not take advantage of early detection at all and others who do not get screening mammograms and clinical breast exams at regular intervals," said Georgeen Polyak, PhD., Director of the Oak Park Department of Public Health.

"If all women age 40 and older took advantage of early detection methods—mammography plus clinical breast exam—breast cancer death rates would drop much further, up to 30 per cent."

Dr. Polyak noted the following facts about mammograms, noting that the key to mammography screening is that it be done routinely. Once is not enough, she said.

- ?? Women age 65 and older are less likely to get mammograms than younger women (55% vs. 65% for women age 40-49), even though breast cancer risk increases with age.
- ?? Hispanic women have fewer mammograms (58%) than Caucasian (68%) and African American women (68%).
- ?? Women below poverty level are less likely than women at higher incomes to have had a mammogram within the past two years (44% vs. 65% respectively).

National Mammography Day is October 19. Mammography facilities around the country will offer reduced-fee screenings throughout the month of October. To find the nearest certified mammography facilities offering the reduced-fee screenings, call the American Cancer Society at 1.800.227.2345.

For more information on breast cancer and breast self-examination, call the Oak Park Department of Public Health at 708.358.5480.

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