



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oklahoma HMO provides breast cancer awareness tips

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month; more than 230,000 women diagnosed each year

OKLAHOMA – Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, regardless of race or ethnicity, in the United States, not counting some kinds of skin cancer, with more than 230,000 women and more than 2,100 men diagnosed each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and GlobalHealth, an Oklahoma-based health maintenance organization (HMO), is urging Oklahomans to be aware of the disease and take steps for early detection.

“Breast cancer awareness starts with early detection, which starts at home,” said Dr. Wesley Williams, medical director at GlobalHealth. “Knowing your breasts and being aware of any changes is a key step. October is the perfect reminder to schedule mammograms and annual well-woman exams. The sooner breast cancer is detected, the more likely a longer and healthier life is possible.”

This October, GlobalHealth is offering Oklahomans the following breast cancer awareness tips:

Know the tests. Self-breast and clinical-breast exams are physical exams done either by the patient or healthcare provider to feel for lumps or other changes. A mammogram is an X-ray picture of the breast, which, when done regularly, is the most effective way to find breast cancer early – sometimes up to three years before it can be felt. Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is an alternative to mammography usually used to screen women at high risk or to further evaluate abnormalities seen on mammography. Also, genetic testing for the BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations can provide information on whether a patient’s family history of breast cancer is due to an inherited gene mutation. Most women who get breast cancer do not have an inherited gene mutation, but people with a BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutation have a greatly increased risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

Follow testing recommendations. Early detection is the best way to fight breast cancer, and self-breast exams are the first line of defense, recommended when puberty begins. Women who are 40 to 49 years old should discuss the benefits and risks with their Primary Care Physician (PCP), including when to start, how often to get a mammogram and family history, which can

put some women at higher risk. Women who are age 50 to 74 and are at average risk for breast cancer should get a mammogram every two years, according to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

Know the warning signs. The symptoms of breast cancer can be different for everyone, and some may not have any signs or symptoms until after a routine mammogram, according to the CDC. Warning signs include: a new lump in the breast or underarm; thickening or swelling of part of the breast; irritation or dimpling of breast skin; redness or flaky skin in the nipple area or the breast; pulling in of the nipple or pain in the nipple area; nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood; any change in the size or the shape of the breast; or pain in any area of the breast.

Reduce your risk. According to the CDC, there are lifestyle changes that can reduce the risk of breast cancer, including: keeping a healthy weight, exercising at least four hours per week, ensuring a good night's sleep, avoiding or limiting alcoholic drinks to no more than one per day and preventing exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer. The CDC also recommends limiting exposure to radiation from medical imaging tests, including X-rays, CT scans and PET scans if not medically necessary, discussing risks of hormone replacement therapy or birth control pills with your PCP and breastfeeding your children, if possible.

Follow these mammogram tips. Because mammograms can produce discomfort, try to avoid scheduling a visit the week before or during your period, when the breasts may be tender or swollen. On the day of the mammogram, do not wear deodorant, perfume or powder, which can show up as white spots on the test. Lastly, wear a top with a skirt or pants, instead of a dress, which will make it easier to undress from the waist up, according to the CDC.

About GlobalHealth

GlobalHealth is changing health insurance in Oklahoma. As an industry leader, GlobalHealth is an Oklahoma-based health maintenance organization covering more than 44,000 individuals in all 77 Oklahoma counties. Working proactively with each member, GlobalHealth engages a personalized management plan to address their specific needs and ensure the best possible health outcomes. GlobalHealth utilizes cutting edge, predictive data technology as a foundation to deliver improved healthcare as part of its commitment to making health insurance more affordable. Its membership includes state and education employees, federal employees, municipal employees and Medicare Advantage members. GlobalHealth employs more than 250 associates throughout Oklahoma. To learn more, visit www.GlobalHealth.com.

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