

# Breast Cancer and SIDS Awareness

by Cheri Adair



This column focuses on Community Health issues. To send suggestions for this column or contact the author, e-mail [nsnadirectors@yahoo.com](mailto:nsnadirectors@yahoo.com).

I am pleased to introduce my first *Imprint* column, which will focus throughout the year on Community Health issues. Community service enriches our lives by teaching us the value of altruism early in our careers. As nursing students, we also enhance the image of nursing by dedicating ourselves to our communities, showing our concern for the health and well-being of others, and demonstrating our commitment to important nursing issues.

## Breast Cancer

Anyone could fall victim to this silent killer. Advances in treatment modalities such as mammography, genetic screening, chemotherapy, and surgical intervention can prolong lives when combined with early detection. Help in the fight against breast cancer by using the tips that follow as a guide:

- Educate yourself on the latest news and statistics regarding breast cancer, so you can speak effectively on the topic to community members, peers, and decision makers.
- Teach breast self-examination in women's health classes at your local health department. Collaborate with peers and faculty to organize a breast cancer prevention program.
- Participate in National Breast Cancer Awareness Month every October by distributing relevant information and effective displays at your school.
- Organize fundraising teams to donate to Making Strides® Against Breast Cancer, a national noncompetitive walk designed to raise awareness, foster camaraderie, and raise funds for breast cancer research,

patient services, education and advocacy. The campaign is sponsored by the Discovery Channel and the American Cancer Society.

## Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

SIDS can afflict any infant, particularly from one month to one year old. Nurses and nursing students can be great educators on this issue since they typically have experience with new mothers in maternal-child and women's health care settings. Alarming, most deaths from SIDS occur by the end of the sixth month, with the greatest number taking place between 2 and 4 months of age. Startlingly, there is a disproportionate number of deaths among African-American and Native American children from SIDS, so education within these communities is crucial if we are to improve these statistics.<sup>1</sup>

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants should sleep on their backs in order to decrease the likelihood of SIDS. In addition, new research shows that over one-fifth of all deaths from SIDS occur in childcare settings, so SIDS awareness campaigns now include programs that promote SIDS teaching within the childcare environment.

## How to Increase SIDS Awareness

- Distribute materials about SIDS prevention at local parenting, breastfeeding, and childbirth preparation classes and provide informal presentations to reinforce SIDS teaching.
- Demonstrate to new mothers at local hospitals the importance of placing infants on their backs to sleep. Bring examples of sleepers that prevent the need for blankets and comforters in cribs.

(continued on pg. 45)

**2003-2004  
Theme:  
"Community  
Involvement:  
Leaving Our  
Legacy"**



(continued from pg. 43)

- Visit local childcare providers and talk to them about the importance of SIDS prevention. Distribute SIDS information and educational coloring books to families with infants, and explain the hazards of using blankets, heavy bedding, and quilts in cribs or on sleeping surfaces.
- Become an advocate for SIDS education in your clinical setting. ■

*Cheri Adair is Chair of the 2003-2004 Community Health Committee and a nursing student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. You can e-mail her at nsnadirector@yahoo.com throughout the year with suggested topics for this column, or if you have questions about this year's Community Health Program.*

#### References

1. JAMA: *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Vol. 288, Issue 21, p. 2772
2. Gessner, B.D., Ives, G. and Perham-Hester, KA. Association between sudden infant death syndrome and prone sleep position, bed sharing, and sleeping outside an infant crib in Alaska. *Pediatrics* October 2001, Vol. 108, Issue 11, p. 923.

**Call for Submissions** In light of 2003 resolution "Collective and Collaborative Effort between Nurses and Nursing Students to Make the Contributions of Nursing More Visible in the Media," we want to highlight in future columns how nurses and nursing students exemplify excellence in their community. Topics of interest include prevention programs and activities that increase awareness about community health, particularly collaborative efforts among students, faculty and local hospitals. Please send your submissions for future columns to Cheri Adair at [nsnadirector@yahoo.com](mailto:nsnadirector@yahoo.com). I look forward to hearing from you!

## resources

### Breast Cancer Awareness

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
<http://www.nbcam.org>

American Cancer Society  
<http://www.cancer.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer>

National Cancer Institute  
**1-800-4-CANCER**

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation  
<http://www.komen.org>

### SIDS Awareness

National Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Resource Center  
<http://www.sidscenter.org>

First Candle/SIDS Alliance  
<http://www.sidsalliance.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics  
<http://www.aap.org>