

# BREAST CANCER IN MEN

## The warning signs to note

**Namhla Tshisela**

**THE occurrence of breast cancer in a man should serve as a warning to women in the family to undergo genetic testing, a cancer expert has warned.**

"Each man that is diagnosed with breast cancer should go for genetic testing," said Justus Apffelstaedt of the Stellenbosch University.

Though breast cancer in men is rare, it accounts for one man in every 100 women diagnosed.

According to the National Cancer Registry, the risk of breast cancer in men is between one in 500 to one in 1 000, depending on race.

Breast cancer in men is common in older ones, usually affecting men between the ages of 60 and 70.

Like women, men can also get lumps on their breasts which can be felt during self examination, Apffelstaedt said.

The chances of men surviving breast cancer however are lower because they seek medical intervention when it is already late.

This is also because men have little breast tissue and small tumours can affect surrounding tissue and lymph vessels. The



**SAFETY DRIVE: Gauteng MEC for social development Qedani Mahlangu inside the PinkDrive campaign for breast cancer truck that will raise awareness about breast cancer.**

PHOTO: VATHISWA RUSELO

tumours can spread to organs such as the liver, bones and lungs.

The following types of breast cancer are found in men:

- Infiltrating ductal carcinoma – Most men with breast cancer have this type. It is cancer that has spread beyond the cells lining the ducts in the breast.
- Ductal carcinoma in situ – it refers to abnormal cells found in

the lining of a duct.

- Inflammatory breast cancer – a type of cancer in which the breast looks red and swollen and feels warm.
- Paget disease of the nipple is a tumour that has grown from ducts beneath the nipple onto the surface of the nipple.

A history of breast cancer in the family and the presence of breast

cancer susceptibility genes put men at risk of getting the disease.

Other risk factors include exposure to radiation and having a disease related to high levels of the hormone oestrogen.

Treatment for breast cancer in men and women is generally the same. Men also benefit from chemotherapy, radiation, hormonal therapy and surgery.

## Fighting fear of the big C

STIGMA prevents people from getting early treatment for cancer, a public health organisation has warned.

This occurs despite cancer being the leading cause of death worldwide at 8 million deaths a year.

"People still believe that having cancer means that they have one foot in the grave, despite it being treatable," says Lungi Melane-Njeza of John Snow Incorporated.

JSI and the Livestrong – a global cancer campaign founded by cyclist and cancer survivor Lance Armstrong – launched the Cancer Anti-Stigma Initiative in Soweto last week. Melane-Njeza says people delay intervention if they display cancer symptoms because of fear of stigmatisation.

"Some people believe it is contagious. Women may delay treatment if they discover a lump in their breast because being diagnosed with breast cancer could mean an end to their marriages. Some believe God will not recognise them in heaven if they have their breast removed," Melane-Njeza says.

The campaign has been launched in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape, and Khayelitsha, Western Cape, to educate communities and encourage them to seek treatment.