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**CANCER SUPPORT GROUP LOOKS AT ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS  
THAT CAN LEAD TO CANCER**

**GREENSBURG, PA, July 5, 2010 ...** Environmental factors are known to contribute to various chronic health conditions. Excela Health's Breast Cancer Education Support Group will host a free community program titled "Environmental Causes of Cancer," 6 p.m., August 3, Conference Room D, First Floor, Westmoreland Hospital. Marion Bragdon, RN, BSN, M Ed, OCN of the American Cancer Society will explore the factors that can be modified or eliminated to reduce future cancer risks.

According to the ACS, cancer is second only to heart disease as the leading cause of death in the United States. "At least 90 percent of all cancer cases in the United States result from environmental factors, which include both lifestyle factors and exposure to agents in the air and water," noted Bragdon, a certified oncology nurse. "If these factors and behaviors are modified, there is hope in reducing the overall risk of cancer."

For decades, scientists have been conducting epidemiological investigations looking at a variety of environmental and host genetic risk factors. And, almost always, the cancer burden is much greater for environmental causes than just hereditary genetic factors.

"Tobacco accounts for about 60 percent of all U.S. cancer deaths each year," said Bragdon, noting that more than 20 percent of Americans still smoke despite nearly 50 years of cancer warnings."

She added that even though society has posed restrictions on smoking in public places, avoidance is still the only key to prevention. "To successfully

reduce your risks, don't smoke or chew tobacco products and avoid smoke filled rooms," she said. "Alcohol is also an important factor to pay attention to, as it causes 4 percent of all cancers."

Obesity appears to be one of the most important modifiable causes of cancer after tobacco. "Lack of physical activity, weight gain and obesity is the second leading cause of cancer cases in the U.S. today," Bragdon said.

She recommends regular exercise daily and a healthy diet that includes a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains and less red meat consumption. "Weight loss is important for individuals who are overweight," she noted.

Ultraviolet radiation from the sun, sun lamps or tanning beds also has been found to be a contributor to melanoma and other forms of skin cancer. "The incidence of skin cancer is on the rise," emphasized Bragdon. "It is important to avoid sunlight during peak hours of the day, wear sun screen with a minimum SPF of 15 or greater and protective clothing such as hats when outdoors."

Other risk factors include exposure to harsh chemicals, cleaning products and pesticides and even some fragrances. Again, limited exposure is the best form of protection. For cleaning purposes soap, water or vinegar can be used effectively to get the job done.

"Sometimes it's the simple things in life that can truly make a difference," commented Bragdon. "In most cases it involves a little common sense, some behavioral changes, determination and the commitment to make positive and healthy lifestyle choices."

Through this seminar, Bragdon hopes to provide area breast cancer patients and their families with additional knowledge and support to help guide them in making future health care decisions relating to their cancer and the impact it may have upon future generations.

For more information or to register for this upcoming program, please call Excelsa Health's Call Center, toll-free, 1-877-771-1234.