

## San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium

The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium was held from December 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup>. One of the premier meetings reporting on breast cancer only, the Symposium always has plenty of news. There were over 50 advocates that attended this years meeting, thirty-three who participated in a unique program.

### Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation Patient Advocate Program

The Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation Patient Advocate Program is in its 11<sup>th</sup> year. The program offers financial assistance to advocates to attend the meeting. Participating advocates need to have basic knowledge of breast cancer and represent a constituency. Each evening during the Symposium, there is a mentor session staffed by scientists, researchers and clinicians. The aims of these sessions are to help put information into perspective, to translate scientific language and answer questions. These very helpful sessions are open to all advocates attending the Symposium. Participants in the Alamo program are expected to report on an assigned "hot topic." These "hot topic" reports are then compiled into a book that can be used by advocacy groups. For more information about the Alamo program go to:

[http://www.alamobreastcancer.org/advocate\\_program\\_summary.html](http://www.alamobreastcancer.org/advocate_program_summary.html)

## Breaking News

### The Use Adjuvant TAC Improves Disease-Free Survival and Overall Survival

An important question for breast cancer patients is whether a taxane added to adjuvant chemotherapy will improve survival. The answer appears to be yes. The Breast Cancer International Research Group in Los Angeles reported that, after 55 months, a combination of docetaxel/Taxol and doxorubicin/Adriamycin, and cyclophosphamide/ Cytoxan or Neosar (TAC), significantly reduced the risk of recurrence and death in women with node-positive disease, compared with combination of called FAC (5-fluorouracil (Acrucil or 5-FU), doxorubicin, and cyclophosphamide.) After nearly 5 years, 75% of women receiving TAC were disease free, compared with 68% on FAC. Overall survival was greater for women receiving TAC (87%) versus those who received FAC (81%). However, TAC patients were more likely to develop fevers and infections due to lower white blood cell levels.

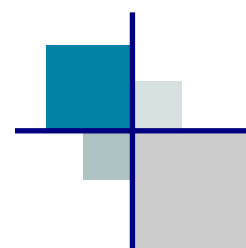
**Source:** Abstract 43: TAC improves disease free survival and overall survival over FAC in node positive early breast cancer patients, BCIRG 001: 55 months follow-up. Martin M, et al <http://www.sabcs.saci.org/> or <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/465643>

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### RESEARCH ADVOCACY NETWORK MISSION:

*Our mission is to enable advocates and researchers to advance science and improve patient care through education, support, collaboration and the measurement and dissemination of research results and advocate interventions.*



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## Women Do Not Need to Rush Into Chemotherapy

An interesting study done by researchers from the British Columbia Cancer Agency in Vancouver, Canada used information from breast cancer and pharmacy databases to try to determine whether the start date of chemotherapy influenced how well patients responded to treatment. In the study, the women were divided into 4 groups, based upon how soon chemotherapy was started after surgery: Group 1 (0-4 weeks), Group 2 (4-8 weeks), Group 3 (8-12 weeks), and Group 4 (12-24 weeks). The patients all had similar characteristics and similar diagnoses with the women in Group 1 having a high rate of node positive disease

Women in the first 3 groups had similar rates of survival (Group 1 84%, Group 2 85% and Group 3 89%). However, women whose chemotherapy started after 3 months fared significantly worse (Group 4 78%). These findings should help advocates reassure patients that waiting to begin chemotherapy will not affect their survival. Women will have time to gather more information, get a second opinion, or make arrangements for work or family needs during treatment.

**Source:** Abstract 130 Delivery of adjuvant chemotherapy for breast cancer more than 12 weeks after definitive surgery may compromise survival Lohrisch C, et al <http://www.sabcs.saci.org/>

## Fertility Issues in Young Women with Breast Cancer

Dr. Partridge et al presented the results of a survey of fertility issues in young women. This is excellent example of researchers and a patient advocate organization collaborating to answer an important research question. The Young Survival Coalition, which is an organization focused specifically on the concerns and issues of young women with breast cancer, e-mailed the survey to their members. The results indicate that 55% of young women were concerned about the possibility of becoming infertile due to treatment and 28% said their concerns affected their treatment decision.

**Source:** Abstract 31 A web-based survey of fertility issues in young women with breast cancer. Partridge AH, et al. <http://www.sabcs.saci.org/>

## African American Women and Breast Cancer

Two studies addressed the controversial and troubling issue of whether race alone predicts for worse outcomes in African American women with breast cancer. Researchers from the MD Anderson Cancer Center looked at data from a number of clinical trials in which Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American women received a mastectomy and either post-surgical or pre-surgical chemotherapy. The results were striking. In both pre- and post-surgical groups, African Americans did worse than either Hispanics or Caucasians – they had significantly lower survival rates, while Hispanic and Caucasian women had about the same rates.

Dr. Albain reported on an analysis of 5 SWOG (Southwest Oncology Group) studies that treated node positive breast cancer patients. For both pre and postmenopausal women, African American women had lower disease free and over all survival. This was true when factors such as baseline disease, socioeconomic status and treatment were controlled for. Authors of both papers called for more research into this area. Until we know more about why race alone predicts for a worse outcome among African American women with breast cancer, support for screening programs aimed at African American women is essential.

**Source:** Abstract 613 African-American patients with breast cancer have worse overall survival than Caucasian and Hispanic patients after mastectomy and doxorubicin-based chemotherapy: data from two independent data sets. Woodward WA, et al; 21] Outcome of African Americans on Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG) breast cancer adjuvant therapy trials. Albain KS, et al. <http://www.sabcs.saci.org/> or <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/465763>



# Calendar-What is Research Advocacy Network Doing?

## November 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

## December 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

## January 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## Network News

Network News is being sent to you as a courtesy. If you would like to continue receiving this publication, please subscribe by sending an email to [info@researchadvocacy.org](mailto:info@researchadvocacy.org) and typing "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. The newsletter is currently published monthly and will include articles on advocacy, research results and activities.

## Research Advocacy Network

*Advancing Patient-Focused Research*

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## Research Advocacy Network Activities

- November, 2003 Training "*Drug Development*" and "*Protecting Research Participants*" NSABP Patient Advocate meeting (Sponsored by the Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups)
- November, 2003, Advisory Board University of North Carolina School of Public Health Conference "*Patients, Families and Health-care Providers: Partners in Decision-Making, Advocates in Health Care*"
- November, 2003 InterSPORE meeting, Patient Advocate representative of Northwestern's Breast Cancer SPORE
- November, 2003 Patient Representative Committee ECOG Meeting
- December, 2003 San Antonio Breast Cancer Conference
- January, 2004 ACOSOG Patient Advocate Committee
- January, 2004 Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups, Patient Advisory Board
- January, 2004 ASCO committee representative
- January, 2004 RTOG Patient Advocate Committee

*Do you have events you would like added to the calendar?  
Send an email to [info@researchadvocacy.org](mailto:info@researchadvocacy.org)*

## We Want to Hear From You

Research Advocacy Network is YOUR network. A part of our primary mission is to serve and support research advocates and in order to do that we want to hear from you. Please help us by going to [www.researchadvocacy.org](http://www.researchadvocacy.org) and completing the survey. If you prefer to have a print copy that you can fax back to us, just let us know via email to [info@researchadvocacy.org](mailto:info@researchadvocacy.org) or call Elda Railey at 214-683-9937.

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