

HEALTH

L.A. Care Celebrates Women's Health Week with Life-Saving Workshops

CANCER remains the second leading cause of death for women, just behind heart disease, but many still don't know how they can prevent the disease. In celebration of National Women's Health Week May 13 – 19, L.A. Care Health Plan is hosting a series of free wellness workshops on breast, cervical and colorectal cancer at its Inglewood Family Resource Center. The workshops will educate women about screenings, early detection, and prevention of the three types of cancer.

One in eight women in the U.S. will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime, with more than 266,000 cases expected to be diagnosed this year. While survival rates have increased over the years, nearly 41,000 women are expected to die from breast cancer this year.

Cervical cancer does not occur as often as breast cancer, but survival rates are much lower. It's estimated more than 13,000 women will be diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer this year and nearly a third will die.

The lifetime risk of developing colorectal cancer is one in 24 for women. It is the third leading cause of cancer-related death in both men and women, with more than 50,600 deaths expected this year in men and women.

When:

Thursday, May 17, 2-4 pm – Breast and Cervical Cancer Workshop
Friday, May 18, 2-4 pm – Colorectal Cancer Workshop

Where:

Inglewood Family Resource Center
3111 West Century Boulevard
Suite 100



Cancer Docs Feel Unprepared, But Recommend Marijuana Anyway

By Carla K. Johnson

SEATTLE—Nearly half of U.S. cancer doctors who responded to a survey say they've recently recommended medical marijuana to patients, although most say they don't know enough about medicinal use.

The results reflect how marijuana policy in some states has outpaced research, the study authors said. All 29 states with medical marijuana programs allow doctors to recommend it to cancer patients. But no rigorous studies in cancer patients exist. That leaves doctors to make assumptions from other research on similar prescription drugs, or in other types of patients.

"The big takeaway is we need more research, plain and simple," said Dr. Ilana Braun of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, who led the study published last week in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Patients want to know what their doctors think about using marijuana. In the new study, cancer doctors said their conversations about marijuana were almost always started by patients and their families, not by the doctors themselves.

Overall, nearly eight in 10 cancer doctors reported having discussed marijuana with patients or their families, with 46 percent recommending it for pain and other cancer-related problems to at least one patient in the past year.

Among those who said they recommended marijuana, 56 percent said they did not have sufficient knowledge to do so.

"They're not as close-minded as you might think, and they also feel they have a lot to learn," Braun said.

The survey was conducted in a random sample of cancer doctors; researchers got

completed surveys from 237 doctors, or 63 percent.

Marijuana is considered an illegal drug by federal officials and federal restrictions have limited research. Last year, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine concluded the lack of scientific information about marijuana poses a risk to public health.

There's evidence marijuana can treat chronic pain in adults and medications similar to marijuana can ease nausea from chemotherapy.

In the study, 67 percent of cancer doctors said they view marijuana as a useful addition to standard pain therapies, with 75 percent saying it posed less risk of overdose than opioids. About half view marijuana as equal to, or more effective than, standard treatments for cancer-related nausea.

Marijuana isn't harmless. The National Academies report said pot smoking may be linked to higher chances of traffic accidents, chronic bronchitis from long-term use and schizophrenia and other causes of psychosis, especially in the most frequent users.

Dr. Steven Pergam of Seattle Cancer Care Alliance answers questions about marijuana's safety from his colleagues at the treatment center.

His responses depend on the patient. A dying patient with cancer that's spread? "Whatever they want to do to make themselves comfortable," said Pergam, who wasn't involved in the new research. A patient with leukemia, however, should be warned of a theoretical possibility of a fungal infection tied to cannabis use.

"If we're not comfortable having these discussions, patients will get information from other sources, and it's not going to be as reliable," he said.

Graduates Losing Health Coverage Eligible for Covered California

You have finally climbed the mountaintop and are about to graduate from college. You're going to walk across that stage, grab that diploma and begin the rest of your life.

But life can change in an instant, and it's imperative to have the important things — like your health — covered. Graduation means some of you may be coming off a school-sponsored health plan, or turning 26, the limit for when you can remain on your parents' health plan. Some of you may be getting married and entering a new phase of life.

"Congratulations, graduates, for everything you have achieved. As you prepare to move onto the next stage of your life, ask yourself: What am I doing for health care?" said Covered California Executive Director Peter V. Lee. "If you are leaving your coverage behind when you graduate, then you may be eligible to enroll through Covered California's special-enrollment period. Taking care of your health gives you the freedom to pursue your dreams."

Graduating and thus losing your coverage, turning 26 and coming off of your parents' plan and getting married are all scenarios that might make you eligible for special enrollment through Covered California, the agency that administers the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in California. There are currently more than 250,000 Californians between the ages of 19 and 29 enrolled in a plan through Covered California, and they are receiving affordable, name-brand insurance coverage.

The following circumstances are among the more common reasons individuals become eligible for special enrollment:

- They lose their health coverage because they have lost or changed jobs.
- They get married or enter a domestic partnership.
- They have a baby, adopt a child or place a child for adoption or in foster care.
- They move and gain access to new Covered California health insurance plans that were not available where they previously lived.
- They become a citizen, a U.S. national or a lawfully present individual.

If you qualify under any of these

conditions, you are eligible to get health insurance coverage and join your fellow Californians in having one less thing to worry about.

Make sure you take advantage of the financial help available to you and your family. During the recently completed open-enrollment period, the 85 percent of Covered California enrollees who receive subsidies saw their cost of coverage drop 11

percent in 2018 over the previous year. Nearly 60 percent of subsidy-eligible enrollees have access to Silver coverage for less than \$100 per month, and 74 percent can purchase Bronze

coverage for less than \$10 per month. That's less than what some people pay for their cell phone bill.

For more information on special-enrollment rules, visit: <http://www.CoveredCA.com/individuals-and-families/getting-covered/special-enrollment>.

Those who qualify for Medi-Cal may enroll through Covered California year round.

Eligible consumers who are interested in signing up should go to www.CoveredCA.com where they can get help to enroll. They can explore their options and find out if they qualify for financial help by using the Shop and Compare Tool. They can also get free and confidential enrollment assistance by visiting www.coveredca.com/find-help/ and searching among 800 storefronts statewide, or more than 17,000 certified enrollers who can assist consumers in understanding their choices and enrolling, including individuals who can assist in other languages. In addition, consumers can reach the Covered California service center by calling (800) 300-1506.

