

Newsletter - June 1998

Report from the first Collaborators' Meeting

The Million Women Study Collaborators' Meeting was held on Wednesday the 20th of May at St Catherine's College, Oxford, and was attended by over 120 delegates from breast screening centres, as well as quality assurance representatives and others. The meeting was chaired by Martin Vessey and Joan Austoker. The programme included presentations about HRT and breast cancer (Gillian Reeves), characteristics of HRT users and the effect of HRT on recall at breast screening (Emily Banks), risks and benefits of HRT (Valerie Beral) and treatment of breast cancer (Richard Peto). A copy of some of the information from the meeting is attached.

There were fruitful discussion sessions with participants and points raised included:

- A poster with information about the Million Women Study would be useful to display at screening centres and we will attempt to prepare one.
- The Million Women Study co-ordinating centre could benefit from liaison with other organisations which look at screen detected breast cancer, such as BASO and relevant cancer registries.
- Figures regarding breast cancer incidence from cancer registries may not be directly comparable to those of the NHSBSP, due to differences in the way that microinvasive disease is classified.
- Some breast screening centres are able to provide information on oestrogen receptor status and treatment received by women with screen detected breast cancer. This would be a valuable addition to the study and we will contact each centre in due course to see if this information is available.

Future Collaborators' Meetings

The plan is to hold a meeting of collaborators every year to present results and discuss progress, as well as discussing any issues relevant to collaborators. The next meeting is planned for May/June 1999, and will probably be held in London.

The staff at the Million Women Study co-ordinating centre would like to thank all of the collaborators and other delegates who attended the meeting, for making it such a success. The points raised by the delegates and the questions asked will add to the quality of the study. We hope you enjoyed the day as much as we did! We also thank all screening centre staff for their ongoing participation in the

study. If any collaborators have any other suggestions or comments they would like to make about any aspect of the study, please call the freephone number 0800 262 872 or speak to your study liaison staff.

Completing recruitment

Women should receive the Million Women Study questionnaire sent out at breast screening once only, so recruitment should take place over a full screening cycle (usually 2-3 years, depending on the centre). A number of centres are reaching the end of their screening cycle and are therefore about to complete the recruitment phase of the Million Women Study.

After the recruitment phase, centres will continue to be involved in the collaboration, follow-up of participants, and discussing results, participating in meetings, etc.

Follow-up for breast cancer and data quality

Follow-up for the Million Women Study involves staff from the co-ordinating centre visiting each breast screening centre and matching up the names of women participating in the study with those diagnosed with breast cancer at screening. The follow-up of women recruited during the 1996/1997 screening year has been completed at many centres. A total of 47,040 women have been followed up, and 201 cancers were detected at screening in these women. One of the women diagnosed with cancer refused any form of investigation or intervention. Of the remaining 200 there was 100% reporting of tumour type, 100% reporting of invasive status and 100% reporting of size. Of the invasive tumours detected, 98% stated the grade of the tumour and 78% reported that axillary nodes had been examined histologically. 18% of these had positive nodes. Collaborators at the meeting said the percentage reporting histological examination of lymph nodes is likely to reflect surgical practice and is in keeping with the findings of the BASO audit.

This means that the breast cancer data provided by the breast screening centres for the Million Women Study is very high quality indeed, making future findings regarding breast cancer as reliable as possible.

Publications and reports

The study team will soon be preparing a report describing the Million Women Study design and the characteristics of the first 100,000 women recruited. The

draft report will be circulated to collaborating centres to allow comments from collaborators before submission to a peer-reviewed journal.