

Newsletter - March 1997

Progress: Enthusiastic response from centres

The first participating breast screening centre began sending out questionnaires for The Million Women Study in May 1996. Thanks to the enthusiasm of staff at screening centres across the UK, there are now about 30 centres currently sending out questionnaires and 30 more in the process of joining them. In the past year over 80 ethics committees have approved the study. If recruitment continues at the current rate, the study should have recruited over 250,000 women by the end of 1997; already the largest number of women ever recruited into a study of this nature in the world.

Official Launch

The Million Women Study will be officially launched on Thursday 8th May, a year after the first questionnaires were sent out to women invited for breast screening. Baroness Cumberlege, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health will launch the study at the headquarters of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, at Lincoln's Inn Fields in London. Julietta Patnick, the national co-ordinator of the Breast Screening Programme will also attend. The launch is taking place from 11.00am to 2.00pm and will be accompanied by presentations, press briefings and a luncheon; all interested breast screening centres are invited to send representatives (see form below).

HRT use: higher than expected

Preliminary results confirm pilot study findings of high and increasing use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) among women of screening age. In many centres, about a third of women aged 50-64 are current HRT users and a further 14% have used it at some stage in the past. The fact that a large number of women are now using HRT makes it even more important to find out what effects HRT has on a woman's breasts and her risk of developing breast cancer.

New questionnaire

Staff at the Million Women Study Co-ordinating Centre in Oxford have been working on a new version of the questionnaire, which will soon be available to screening centres. The new questionnaire is slightly narrower and is printed on lighter paper, making it easier to fit into envelopes. It has a column format, which should be easier to fill out and the paler background will help with

electronic storage and interpretation. A question about breast feeding has been added.