

Women rally for mammogram funding

Hundreds of women rally to call for more state funding to the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program

Celeste M. Ball/J. Zellermyer WGN News

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CHICAGO — Hundreds are calling for more state funding for the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program.

IBCCP is a cancer screening initiative that provides free mammograms to uninsured women.

However, organizers of a rally held in Chicago Thursday, say the program has been severely underfunded.

The Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force is one group that gathered at the First United Methodist Church, 77 W. Washington Street at 10 a.m.

Task force members say they understand the state is confronting budget problems, but sacrificing women's lives is not an acceptable budget solution.

They revealed the amount of state money funded to the (IBCCP) is supposed to cover breast cancer screenings to 300,000 eligible women throughout Illinois, but that the current funding only allows 1 in 8 uninsured women over 40 to get the free screening.

The Chicago Breast Cancer Quality Consortium also released findings of their own prior to the rally.

The group evaluated the quality of breast cancer screening and treatment at 56 local hospitals.

Research revealed that only one-third of facilities met the standard for early breast cancer detection and that only 80% were up to speed with finding cancer during mammograms.

The research also showed that only about 60% of health facilities that were evaluated were able to demonstrate that they met the quality standard for finding cancer.

Some are looking at the report as a step forward in understanding and correcting racial disparity in breast cancer death rates in Chicago.

Research shows that African-American women in Chicago with breast cancer are more likely to die of it than their white counterparts.

Some experts blame the game on poor quality screenings and treatment.

A researcher who documented the disparity says that if it didn't exist, about 100 black women's lives would be saved every year.

Dr. Steve Whitman spoke about the disparity at Thursday's rally, saying, "What we want today is to kick into motion a campaign to eliminate this disparity, not just for black women, but for Hispanic women and Asian women. We want everyone to get the same benefits we have to offer for health care.

For more information on breast cancer and the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, call 1-888-522-1282.