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White House Honors Executive Director of the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force
Anne Marie Murphy, PhD named “Champion of Change”

Chicago, September 27, 2011 – Anne Marie Murphy, PhD, executive director of the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force was one of 15 individuals selected as a White House, “Champion of Change,” as part of President Obama’s Winning the Future Initiative, Murphy will be honored at the White House today, Tuesday, Sept. 27, as a champion of change in the fight against breast cancer.

Every week the White House recognizes ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things on their “Champions of Change” blog. These champions are considered some of the biggest innovators, educators and builders in the country.

Murphy is currently in Washington D.C. attending an event to honor the group. Each of the individuals will be posting a blog entry on the Champions web site.

“Every woman should have an equal chance at survival from breast cancer,” said Murphy. “Too many African-American and other women of color are dying unnecessarily from breast cancer today in Chicago and it does not have to be this way.”

Chicago is considered a city rich with resources – academic, civic, philanthropic and even health care. Yet, Chicago has one of the highest disparity rates in the country when it comes to breast cancer mortality for African American women. Research from Dr. Steve Whitman at the Sinai Urban Health Institute shows that African American women are 62 percent more likely to lose the battle against breast cancer than their white counterparts.

Chicago also has some of the lowest mammogram screening rates in the country for women receiving Medicare and the rate for African American women on Medicare was even lower than the low rate seen on average.

“Statistics like these are both shocking and inhumane because they should not exist in a City like ours – the City of Big Shoulders,” said Murphy. “Yet, when it comes to breast cancer, we are clearly failing a large portion of our citizens. The fact that African American women have seen no improvement in survival over the last 20 years when so much has improved with treatment and mammography is a testament to this failure. It is quite simply a health care injustice.”

The Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force was created in 2007 from a “Call to Action” following publication of these disturbing statistics. The mission of the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force is to eliminate the disparity in survival from breast cancer that is seen in Chicago today.

“If you look across the country, you see wide variations in this death disparity,” said Murphy.

In a city like New York City, the disparity is much lower than it is in Chicago.. In some recent years, the disparity has been almost nonexistent in New York City. It is hard to explain such a geographic variation by differences in biology.

Furthermore, if some people had significantly more aggressive tumors, then they should have been dying at a higher rate even prior to the last 20 years when great advances in screening and treatment were being seen.

The Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force believes that much of this disparity is driven by unequal access to high quality health care. Work by researchers associated with the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force has already shown that African American women are far less likely to access digital mammography, to have their mammograms read by breast imaging specialists, to receive same day results from diagnostic mammography.

Research presented at the American Association of Cancer Research’s Cancer Disparity meeting last week in Washington D.C. suggested variation in breast cancers potentially missed by prior mammograms with higher potential miss rates among poor women, women with less education, women without access to health insurance and minority women. The Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force has also shown inequity in the distribution of cancer resources with almost no American College of Surgeon’s Approved Cancer Treatment Programs in areas of high breast cancer mortality in Chicago (see map below).

To address these issues, under Murphy’s leadership and with generous funding from Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation and Avon Foundation for Women, the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force established the Chicago Breast Cancer Quality Consortium.

In 2009, the Quality Consortium became the nation’s first Patient Safety Organization dedicated solely to breast health. With the federal protections provided by this designation, over 80 percent of Metropolitan Chicago hospitals and the Chicago Department of Public Health have signed up to join the Chicago Breast Cancer Quality Consortium project and share quality data to identify deficits and implement strategies to improve breast cancer screening and treatment and reduce disparities. The first year of data collection suggested wide variation in breast care quality and showed that many Metro Chicago hospitals could not demonstrate that they were meeting national and Chicago Breast Cancer Quality Consortium chosen bench marks for highest quality care.

“On Nov. 11, we will be releasing the results from our second year of data collection and in 2012, this project will go statewide through a collaboration with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services,” said Murphy.

The Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force led by Board President, Dr. David Ansell, Chief Medical Officer of Rush University Medical Center, is comprised of many experts in breast cancer care and research and healthcare more generally and also patient advocates and breast cancer survivors. Together uniting to end disparities, they take a multifaceted approach championing legislative action, grassroots mobilization, public outreach and education and innovative research. In 2009, partnering with Susan G. Komen-Chicago Affiliate, the Task Force successfully passed legislation to combat breast cancer disparities by improving insurance coverage for mammography and making many improvements in the State’s Medicaid program with respect to breast care.

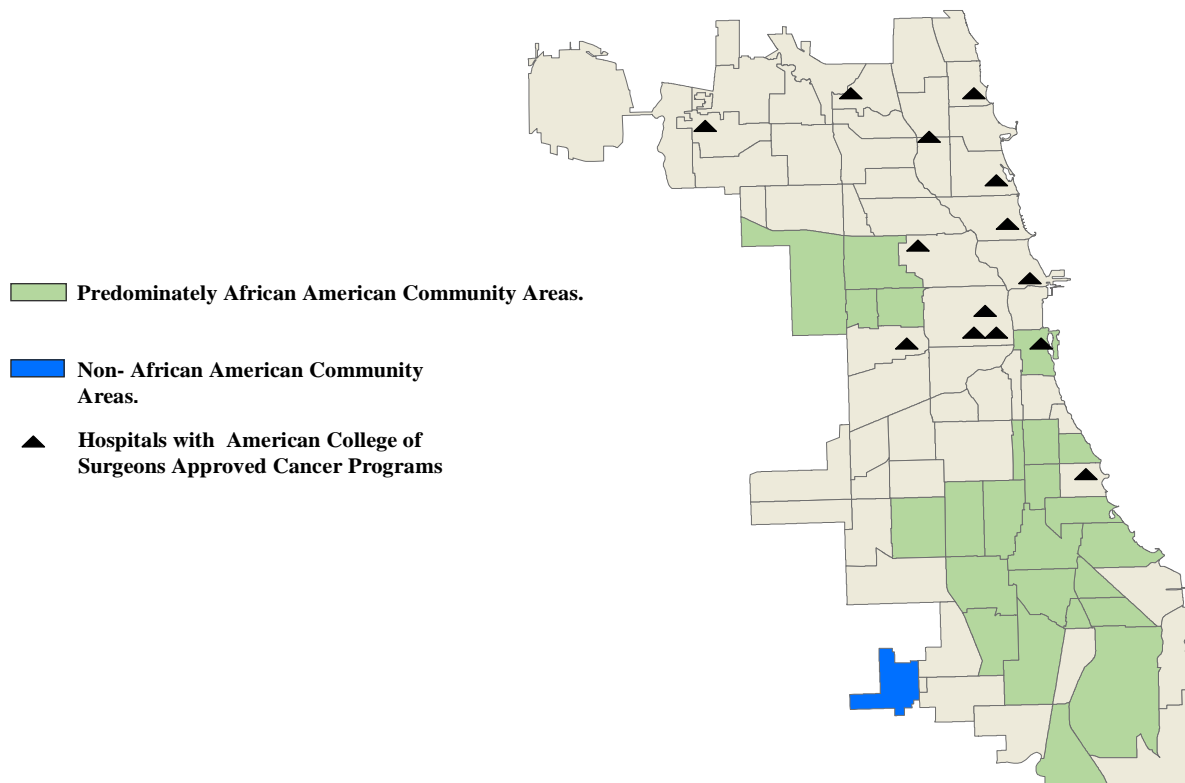
The Task Force has also collaborated with numerous other community based groups to advocate for more adequate funding for the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, which currently is funded to serve less than 12% of eligible uninsured women. This underfunding has a disparate effect on women of color who are more likely to be uninsured.

Dr. Murphy has a long history of championing change and improvement in the healthcare system. From 2003 to 2007, she was the Illinois State Medicaid Director and was responsible for the creation of the nation's first universal healthcare program for all uninsured children "All Kids." She also led the state's efforts to transform the Medicaid program in to a patient centered medical home program and instituted disease management to help those with chronic diseases better manage their illnesses.

Dr. Murphy has also championed many women's healthcare initiatives including expansion of the Illinois Healthy Women Program and the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program. Today, Illinois is the only state to have a universal breast and cervical screening program for all uninsured women but the program is significantly underfunded serving less than 12 percent of eligible uninsured women.

During her time as Medicaid Director, Dr. Murphy sought greater accountability from state procured health plans and instituted a variety of mechanisms that tied pay to performance insisting that high quality healthcare be provided to those reliant on state healthcare programs. Later, Dr. Murphy joined the Governor's office as Director of State Health Programs and working collaboratively with advocates, she designed the universal healthcare program known as Illinois Covered. In 2009, she took a new position as the Director of the Chicago Breast Cancer Quality Consortium within the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force and in 2010 she was named the Task Force's new Executive Director. There she has used her many years of service in the healthcare arena to forge change, innovation and quality improvement, seeking to improve the quality of care for all Chicagoans and in particular to reduce deaths from breast cancer for women of color.

Chicago Community Areas with the Highest 2000 -2005 Average Annual Breast Cancer Mortality Rates



MORE DETAILED BACKGROUND:

In October 2006, the Sinai Urban Health Institute and Dr. David Ansell at Rush University Medical Center released a groundbreaking study on alarming disparities in breast cancer mortality rates between African-American and white women in Chicago. The study found that the breast cancer mortality rate for African-American women in Chicago was 68% higher than that of white women, a disparity that cannot be explained by genetics alone. The report dramatically illustrated that over the last 23 years, advances in mammography screening and breast cancer treatment in Chicago have not helped reduce breast cancer mortality for African-American women. The report was a wake-up call to the entire medical community that more needs to be done to improve breast cancer awareness, access, screening and treatment.

Today, over 100 organizations and more than 200 breast cancer experts make up the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force. In October 2007, the Task Force released its first major report, "Improving Quality and Reducing Breast Cancer Mortality in Metropolitan Chicago," with 37 recommendations for addressing racial disparities in breast cancer mortality. In October 2009, the Task Force announced the creation of the Chicago Breast Cancer Quality Consortium. More information on the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force can be found at **www.chicagobreastcancer.org**