



Witness Project of Harlem Members' Comments on the Advocates Mentoring Advocates Training Program on Breast Cancer and the Environment

What We Learned

- The African-American community has not been focused at all on the impact of the environment and environmental exposures on the risk for breast cancer. The Advocates Mentoring Advocates training program gave us new and extremely important information to take out to the community.
- We learned how to read labels for personal care and cleaning products, what chemicals to look for and avoid, and what safer alternatives were out there.
- In many communities, there are few safe, affordable choices, only 99¢ stores. We learned how to tell our community about affordable alternatives and gave people the idea they can have some control over their lives.
- Many hair and nail products used by African American women contain endocrine disrupting chemicals, like phthalates and formaldehyde, that increase the risk for breast cancer. This is information we need to get out to our community.
- More has to be done to protect us from unsafe chemical exposures. We can advocate for stronger laws and regulations, like safer products in nail salons.

What We Recommend

1. Breast cancer and the environment messages and presentations we take to our communities need to be tailored to audiences who may be at different education levels and socioeconomic circumstances. Advocates need to know their audience first and revamp their presentations accordingly. One shoe does not fit all.
2. Community presentations about breast cancer and the environment should be interactive, with more questions and answers, rather than reading from a power point presentation.
3. Bringing actual products and safe alternatives to the presentations will make them more interactive.
4. Community presentations are the most effective with smaller groups. Ten is ideal but never more than 30.
5. One hour education sessions about breast cancer and the environment may be too long because there is so much information. The information can be broken down into smaller segments and could be delivered to community groups as a series of presentations.