



Rethink Breast Cancer applauds Ontario's decision to fund Herceptin

Funding for small tumours a first under province's new Evidence Building Program

TORONTO, ON – May 12, 2011 – Today, Rethink Breast Cancer (Rethink) applauds the Ontario government's decision to provide breast cancer patients with tumours less than or equal to 1 cm access to the revolutionary drug Herceptin under the new Evidence Building Program (EBP). This decision means a new lease on life for Jill Anzarut, the 35-year-old mother of two whose 0.5 cm tumour was deemed too small to qualify her to receive the drug under the previous provincial criteria.

"After advocating for this change for so long, I'm so relieved that I will now have access to Herceptin. No one should have to suffer through the fear and worry of being denied treatment for such an aggressive disease," says Jill. "I feel stronger knowing that I'm now able to do everything in my power to help prevent my cancer coming back. I'm very grateful for the support of my family and friends, and the continued dedication of groups like Rethink in helping me and others like me across Ontario."

Working alongside Jill, Rethink has advocated for equal and timely access to Herceptin for women with HER2-positive tumours less than 1 cm. Speaking out to the media regarding the inequality in access to treatment across Canada, Rethink also started a letter writing campaign on their website, www.rethinkbreastcancer.com, and encouraged the public to support women like Jill by speaking out against this issue and demonstrating a need for policy change.

"Jill has been a fearless advocate for this cause, demanding the best possible care for herself and others like her," says MJ DeCoteau, founder and executive director of Rethink Breast Cancer. "It's so inspiring to see how Jill's perseverance and dedication helped lead to such an important policy change. I'd also like to thank all of Rethink's members for their tireless efforts to encourage this change that will impact the lives and futures of women throughout the province."

According to today's announcement by the government, the new EBP will allow the gathering of evidence on the benefit and outcomes of cancer drugs. Effective May 12, 2011, the use of Herceptin, in conjunction with chemotherapy, to treat breast tumours of less than or equal to 1 cm in women who are node negative and HER2-positive, was approved as the first drug in the program. The government has indicated that they are developing a full program framework over the coming weeks and months and will introduce additional cancer drugs to the EBP over time.

"While there are still many details about the new provincial program that need to be worked out, we are hopeful that the new criteria will address the need for increased and timely access to treatments for all Ontarians living with breast cancer," says DeCoteau.

In the meantime, Jill will receive her first funded treatment with Herceptin on Friday May 13, 2011. Herceptin, when given in combination with chemotherapy, has been shown to reduce the rates of

recurrence by more than half within four years of diagnosis in patients with HER2-positive breast cancer, a particularly aggressive form of the disease that affects 20 to 25 per cent of patients.

About Rethink Breast Cancer

By taking a breakthrough approach to all aspects of breast cancer, we are thinking differently about how to beat breast cancer. Our mission is to continuously pioneer cutting edge breast cancer research, education and support that speaks fearlessly to the needs of young women.

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For more information, please contact:

MJ DeCoteau, Executive Director

416-920-0980 ext 222

mj@rethinkbreastcancer.com