

# Consulting with television writers to encourage cancer and disparities topics in television programs



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Representing Amanda Berkowitz & Vicki Beck

November 5, 2007




The Norman Lear Center: Projects - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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ABOUT PROJECTS EVENTS PUBLICATIONS CURRICULUM




**HOLLYWOOD, HEALTH & SOCIETY**

- Overview
- Fact Sheet
- FAQs
- Tipsheets for TV Writers
- Sentinel for Health Award
- American Soaps Abroad
- Advisory Board

**Hollywood, Health & Society** PRINT

**Overview**

Hollywood, Health & Society is a program at the Norman Lear Center that provides entertainment industry professionals with accurate and timely information for health storylines. Funded by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the project recognizes the profound impact that entertainment media have on individual behavior. Read the [press release](#) for the launch of this program.



In [surveys](#) conducted by Porter Novelli during 1999 and 2000, nearly one-half of regular prime-time viewers, and one-third of regular daytime viewers, reported that they took some action after hearing about a health issue or disease on a TV show. In May 2000, the CDC convened a panel of experts to develop a [Research Agenda for Entertainment Education](#). The Lear Center helps the CDC supply writers and producers of all types of entertainment content with accurate health information

FLASH MANIFESTO

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National Cancer Institute - Entertainment Resources - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Address http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/entertainment-overview



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## News

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## Entertainment Resources

### Overview

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) recognizes the power of popular entertainment in shaping the perceptions and practices of its viewers. Television shows, movies, and music not only command the attention of their audiences, but also reinforce existing behavior, demonstrate new behavior, and affect audience emotions. In October 2003, the NCI established a partnership with Hollywood executives and academic, public health, and advocacy organizations to share information with writers and producers about the nation's pressing health issues.

The NCI Entertainment Education Program works in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and with [Hollywood, Health & Society \(HH&S\)](#) at the University of Southern California's Norman Lear Center to provide expert consultation, education and resources for writers and producers who develop scripts with health storylines and information.

Popular entertainment is an ideal outlet for sharing health information and affecting behavior. We are interested in providing information that covers a variety of topics about cancer including complementary and alternative therapies, childhood cancers, nutrition, cancer and the environment, and much more. Knowing that 88 percent of people in America learn about health issues from television, we believe that primetime and daytime television programs, movies, and talk shows are great outlets for health messages.

Not only is television an effective outlet, but, in some cases, it speaks directly to the audiences that we most want to reach - those at greatest risk for cancer. In fact, findings in a 1999 [Healthstyles Survey](#) indicated that regular viewers of soap operas reported more health concerns than individuals who do not watch soap operas.

### Cancer on TV

- [As The World Turns](#)
- [ER](#)
- [Grey's Anatomy](#)
- [House](#)

### Find News Releases

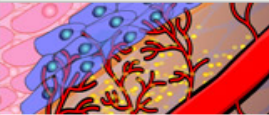
Search For:

Between these dates:

### Entertainment Resource Materials

- [Artificial Tanning Booths and Cancer](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Breast Cancer](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Cancer Clusters](#) (Fact Sheet)
- [Cancer and the Environment](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Cancer and Genetics](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Cancer Health Disparities](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Cancer Myths](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Cancer Overview](#) (Fact Sheet)
- [Cancer Survivorship](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Cellular Telephones and Cancer](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Cervical Cancer](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Childhood Cancers](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Clinical Trials Awareness](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Diet and Diseases](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Obesity and Cancer](#) (Fact Sheet)
- [Ovarian Cancer](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Prostate Cancer](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Quitting Cigarette Smoking](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Screening Mammograms: Questions and Answers](#) (Fact Sheet)
- [Secondhand Smoke](#) (Tip Sheet)
- [Skin Cancer](#) (Tip Sheet)

### BenchMarks



**Volume 6, Issue 1**

[Turning Molecules into Medicine](#)

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### Quick Links

[Director's Corner](#)

[Dictionary of Cancer Terms](#)

[NCI Drug Dictionary](#)


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National Cancer Institute - Cancer on TV - Grey's Anatomy - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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## Entertainment Resources

### Cancer on TV - Grey's Anatomy

**Topic: Breast Cancer and BRCA Gene**  
**Original Air Date** - November 13, 2005: "Let It Be"

A patient in her mid-30s checks into the hospital, after receiving a positive test result for a BRCA gene mutation (short for BRest CAncer gene). She insists on having a prophylactic (preventive) surgery to remove her breasts and ovaries, despite her husband's objections.

Testing positive for a BRCA gene mutation, along with a family history of breast cancer, increases a woman's lifetime chance of developing breast and/or ovarian cancer, from 13 percent to between 36 to 85 percent. However, not all women who inherit an altered gene will develop breast or ovarian cancer and most women do not need to be tested.

Someone who has a positive test result for BRCA may consider [prophylactic \(preventive\) mastectomy](#), which is the surgical removal of one or both breasts to reduce the risk of breast cancer by about 90 percent. This may be an option for a woman whose mother, sister, or daughter had breast cancer, especially if they were diagnosed before age 50. This surgery does not, however, offer a guarantee against developing cancer.

There are many issues surrounding prophylactic surgery, including psychological and physical effects due to the change in body image and loss of normal breast function. A woman should discuss her feelings about mastectomy and alternatives to surgery with her health care providers. Some women obtain a second opinion to help with the decision.

For more information on the BRCA gene, visit: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/BRCA>

For more information on breast cancer, visit: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/breast>

**Topic: Gallbladder Cancer**  
**Original Air Date** - November 13, 2005: "Let It Be"

An elderly woman arrives in the hospital distressed from vomiting and pain in her abdominal region. The surgeon removes the woman's gallbladder and finds that she has gallbladder cancer. There aren't any


**Find News Releases**

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**Quick Links**

Done
Internet

# Expert Briefings and Consultations

- As The World Turns
- ER
- Grey's Anatomy
- House
- Desperate Housewives
- Anita No Te Rejes



# Expert Briefings and Consultations

Over the past year, writers from 'Desperate Housewives', 'House', 'Grey's Anatomy', and 'ER', among many others, have turned to HH&S for assistance with cancer topics almost every week.

Since October 2005:

- HH&S staff responded to 400+ cancer inquiries
- Cancer topics were addressed during dozens of in-person HH&S TV briefings

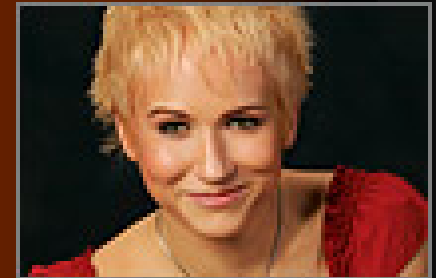


# Network-sponsored PSAs

## As the World Turns

1-800-QUITNOW

Gwen's smoking and pregnancy storyline  
(Jul, '05)



1-800-4-CANCER

Lucinda's breast cancer storyline  
(Jun – Sep, '05)



# HOUSE

The cure for the common medical drama.

SHOW BIOS EPISODES FEATURES VIDEO FOX MOBILE NEWSLETTER BOARDS



FROM THE PHOTO GALLERIES



[Open Photo Gallery](#)

Preview the next episode "Clueless" with guest star Samantha Mathis.

### HERE'S WHAT THE CRITICS ARE SAYING:

"As addictive as Vicodin." - The New York Times  
"The smartest, crankiest, most egotistical doctor on earth..." - TV Guide  
"Tuesday's best hour" - USA Today  
"Hugh Laurie... the British actor is the thinking woman's sex symbol." - Entertainment Weekly

### HOUSE POLL

After watching last night's episode, would you sign up to be an organ donor?

- I've already signed up.
- I'm planning to sign up.
- I want to learn more!
- No thanks.

VOTE

### NEWS

**NEXT EPISODE - Tuesday March 28th**  
**Then, no more breaks for the next 8 weeks!**

Guest stars coming up:  
Samantha Mathis on 3/28  
Michelle Trachtenberg on 4/4

To learn more about organ donation, call 800-355-7427 or visit [www.donatelife.net](http://www.donatelife.net)

### FEATURES

The latest round of [HOUSE SMS](#)  
See this week's episode [PHOTOS](#)  
Find out which [MUSIC](#) was used  
Do some [RESEARCH](#) on the medical facts  
Hear the [PODCAST](#) with audio from the episode

[VIEW ALL FEATURES](#)

### ON THE NEXT HOUSE

**NEXT EPISODE 3/28**  
**"CLUELESS"**

House fights to find proof of how a woman is trying to kill her husband with gold. When Wilson moves in with House after his separation, House discovers he is a great cook.

[PREVIOUS EPISODES](#)

### LATEST CLIPS



[OPEN VIDEO PLAYER](#)



ABC.com: Grey's Anatomy - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Address  http://abc.go.com/primetime/greysanatomy/index.html  Go  Links >>

**About the Show**  
**Character Bios**  
**Cast**  
**Episodes**  
**Gallery**  
**Music Guide**  
**Message Board**  
**Home**



**GREY'S ANATOMY**  
 Sundays 10/9c  


Stop Music On

**SPOTLIGHT**



Get the inside scoop on the interns and doctors at Seattle Grace Hospital! [Click here](#)



**Meet the cast of *Grey's Anatomy!***

The much anticipated *Grey's Anatomy* soundtrack is available! Get



**NEXT EPISODE**

**Sunday, October 23rd at 10/9c. Bring the Pain**  
 Meredith and Dr. Shepherd have to use more than medicine when a young woman's traditionalist, religious father forbids her to have a life-saving operation. Meanwhile, George and Alex are forced to perform surgery under less than ideal conditions in an attempt to save a patient's life, and its decision time for Derek and the two women in his life.

**14D**



**Did You Know?**  
 Curious about last Sunday's medical cases? [Click here!](#)

**INSIDE**



**Take a look** as the medical interns

just try to make it through their first shift.

**Check out the brand new blogs!**

Sneak a peek inside the walls of Seattle Grace Hospital.



**Video Gallery**  
 Watch



Internet Explorer window showing the FOX website for the TV show **HOUSE**. The address bar shows <http://www.fox.com/house/features/research/>.

The page features a navigation menu with **SHOW**, **BIOS**, **EPISODES**, **FEATURES**, and **VIDEO**. Below this is a sub-menu with **BACK TO FEATURES** and **RESEARCH**.

The main content area displays a list of research topics:

- 214 - Sex Kills**
  - [Syphilis](#)
  - [Gonorrhea](#)
  - [Chlamydia](#)
  - [Testicular Cancer](#)
  - [Lymphoma](#)
  - [Brucellosis](#)
  - [Hepatitis C](#)
  - [Myths and Facts about Donation](#)
  - [Organ Donation](#)
- 213 - Skin Deep**
  - [Adolescents and Drug Use](#)
  - [Hypoxic Brain Injury \(Cerebral Hypoxia\)](#)
  - [Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease](#)
  - [Paraneoplastic Syndrome](#)
  - [Ambiguous Genitalia - pseudohermaphroditism](#)
  - [Post-traumatic Stress Disorder](#)
- 212 - Distractions**
  - [Ventricular Tachycardia](#)
  - [Cardiomyopathy](#)
  - [Migraine Headache](#)
  - [Adrenoleukodystrophy](#)
  - [Multiple Sclerosis](#)
  - [Smoking Cessation](#)
- 211 - Need to Know**
  - [Huntington's Disease](#)
  - [Genetics and Disease Prevention](#)
  - [Tamoxifen: Q&A](#)
  - [Birth Control Methods](#)
  - [Endometrial Cancer](#)
  - [Reproductive Health](#)
- 210 - Failure to Communicate**
  - [Aphasia](#)
  - [Agraphia](#)
  - [Encephalitis](#)
  - [Meningitis](#)
  - [Diabetes](#)

Internet Explorer window showing the ABC website for the TV show **GREY'S ANATOMY**. The address bar shows <http://abc.go.com/primetime/greysanatomy/didyouknow.html>.

The page features a navigation menu with **Blogs**, **Character Bios**, **Cast**, **Episodes**, **FAQs**, **Gallery**, **Music Guide**, **Message Board**, and **Home**. Below this is a banner for **GREY'S ANATOMY** with the text "Sundays 10/9c" and "abc HD".

The main content area displays a section titled **DID YOU KNOW?** with the text: "Are you curious about some medical procedures performed in last Sunday's episode? Check below for more information and medical trivia. You just might learn something new!"

Below this is a section titled **Select an episode below...** with a list of episode titles:

- [Band-Aid Covers the Bullet Hole](#)
- [What Have I Done to Deserve This?](#)
- [Yesterday](#)
- [It's the End of the World \(As We Know It\)](#)
- [Break On Through](#)
- [Tell Me Sweet Little Lies](#)
- [Begin the Begin](#)
- [Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer](#)
- [Owner of a Lonely Heart](#)
- [Much Too Much](#)
- [Thanks For the Memories](#)
- [Let It Be](#)
- [Something to Talk About](#)
- [Info You Like A Train](#)
- [Bring the Pain](#)
- [Deny, Deny, Deny](#)
- [Make Me Lose Control](#)
- [Enough is Enough](#)
- [Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head](#)

Below this is a section titled **BANDAID COVERS THE BULLET HOLE** with the text: "So, what's this LVAD thing Denny got? He's so hot."

Below this is a list of bullet points:

- He is good looking. I agree. But, that isn't really to focus on the LVAD.
- It means Left Ventricular Assist Device. We say
- It's a surgically implanted device that will help D continue beating while he's waiting for a donor "bridge to transplant".
- The bulk of the device is located in his abdomen
  - Two tubes connect from the pump to Denny
  - One tube receives blood from his heart-left ventricle.
  - Then this blood flows through the pump tube.
  - The 2nd tube's attached to his aorta which

Below this is a section titled **LET IT BE** with the text: "Addison's dear friend Sawvy is in town. Only, it isn't a fun visit. Sawvy just watched her mother die of ovarian cancer. So, she decided to get tested for the gene mutation that would make her more disposed to breast and ovarian cancer. She tested positive. And now, she's eager to take radical steps to prevent herself from getting cancer."

Below this is a list of bullet points:

- Yawzers. A death in the family and major surgery within a matter of months. That's a lot of stress. But, what does it all mean? Medically speaking.
- The gene mutation is BRCA1 or BRCA2. It stands for BRest CAncer Gene.
- Having this gene only means that you have a MUCH HIGHER RISK of getting breast or ovarian cancer - it DOES NOT mean that you will develop cancer.
- So - your risk is higher if you have BRCA1 or BRCA2 - how much higher?
  - BREAST CANCER
    - In the "general population," (those without either gene mutation) 132 in 1,000 women develop breast cancer.
    - About 360 to 850 women in 1,000 with either BRCA1 or BRCA2 get breast cancer.
  - OVARIAN CANCER
    - In the "general population", 17 out of 1,000 women get ovarian cancer.
    - It's estimated 160 to 600 out of 1,000 women with one of the gene mutations get ovarian cancer.
  - Yikes. That's a lot. I'm glad I know to eat my five vegetables a day and do my monthly self-breast exams! (OK, ok - I KNOW it's preachy - but the National Cancer Institute recognizes that LOTS of fruits and vegetables is one of the absolute best offenses against cancer. And all you football fans know - the best defense is a great offense.)
- Doctors ONLY recommend testing for patients with an unusually high family history of breast or ovarian cancer.
- The test is expensive. Most insurance companies won't cover the cost of testing.
- A genetic counselor guides you through the testing process. The counseling part is very important. For all of the obvious reasons, but also for some less obvious ones. If you test positive for the gene, your insurance company may raise your premiums or drop you. There are many details to consider before testing and genetic counselors will guide you through all of the questions.

Below this is a section titled **So, Sawvy made the decision to get tested and tested positive. Now what?**

Below this is a list of bullet points:

- There are options.
  - OBSERVATION - watch really closely for symptoms of cancer - get mammograms regularly, do self-breast-exams and get clinical breast exams AND get ultrasounds and blood work to test for ovarian cancer. NOTE - pap-smears ONLY test for cervical cancer.
  - RISK AVOIDANCE - eat well, exercise regularly, drink less alcohol. (You know, all things that we resolve to do every New Years Eve).
  - CHEMOPREVENTION - taking natural or synthetic substances with the hope of reducing the risk of developing cancer.

# Panel Discussions - Writers Guild of America

4/04 – Obesity, 5 A Day and Cancer

2/05 – Genetics, Family History and Cancer

2/06 – Health Disparities and Cancer: *Moderator* Neal Baer, MD, executive producer, *Law & Order: SVU* / *Discussant*, Mary Anne Foo, MPH, Executive Director, Orange County Asian and Pacific Island Community Alliance



# The Sentinel for Health Awards

*Recognizes exemplary portrayals of health issues*

One-third of recent finalists were cancer storylines

Prime Time Drama Finalist

- *House* "Babies and Bathwater"
  - small cell lung cancer

Prime Time Minor Storyline Finalist

- *ER* "You Don't Cut Into Cancer"
  - breast cancer

Telenovela Winner

- *Anita, no te Rajes*
  - "Graciela Refuses to Have Cancer" – breast cancer



# TV Monitoring Project

- Spring seasons (January–May); Year 5
- Content analysis of the most popular prime time shows on dimensions such as:
  - Frequency and prominence of 8 types of cancer and tobacco depictions
  - Presence of prevention and risk information
  - Health disparities issues
  - Age, gender and ethnicity of the characters

# Cancer Depictions

## Top 10 shows for general audiences

January – May, 2006

<b>Breast</b>	1 major storyline; 1 minor storyline
<b>Leukemia</b>	1 minor storyline; 3 brief mentions
<b>Lung</b>	1 dialogue; 3 brief mentions
<b>Prostate</b>	1 minor storyline
<b>Unspecified</b>	1 major storyline; 1 dialogue; 11 brief mentions; 1 visual cue
<b>Other</b>	5 major storylines; 4 minor storylines; 11 brief mentions

# Impact Evaluations

## Cancer and family history (BRCA):

ER (Oct. '05) and Grey's Anatomy (Nov. '06)

- 3 waves of panel/cross-sectional data
- APHA Nov, '06 – Valente/USC, Hether/USC, and Massett/NCI

## Cancer disparities (Cutting into cancer):

ER (Oct. '05)

- 2 waves, NBC cross-sectional data
- APHA Nov, '06 – Yeboah/HHS Fellow

## Hodgkin's disease:

Desperate Housewives (Spring/Fall '07)

- Surveys pending



# **'ER' Storyline from April 21, 2005**

**Viewers were exposed to a new concept developed by Dr. Harold Freeman, NCI:**

- Patient Navigator's can assist a newly diagnosed patient through the maze of care offered**
- Minorities are often the least familiar with how to deal with a cancer diagnosis**
- Let viewer know that 'cutting into cancer' is not a harmful process**

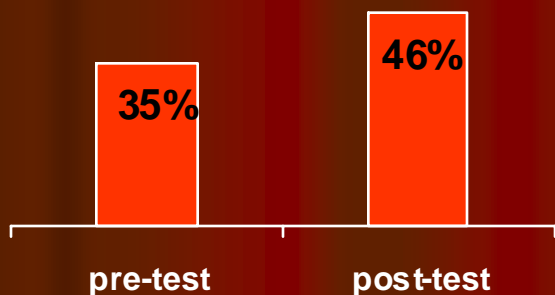


# Breast Cancer on *Ladrón de Corazones*



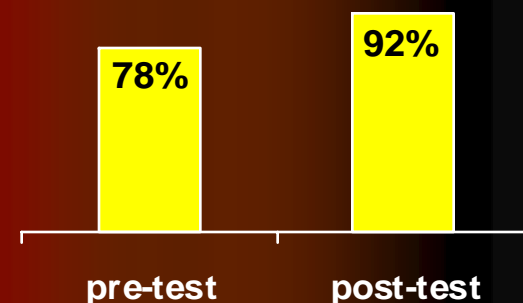
# *Ladrón de Corazones*

## Knowledge and Intentions



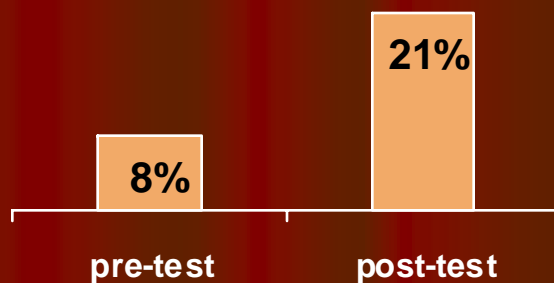
Radiation with lumpectomy

(n=321, 293)

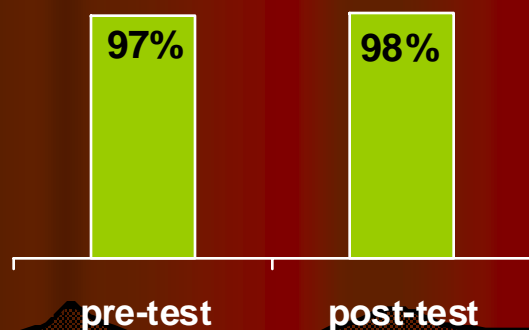


Men will suggest mammogram

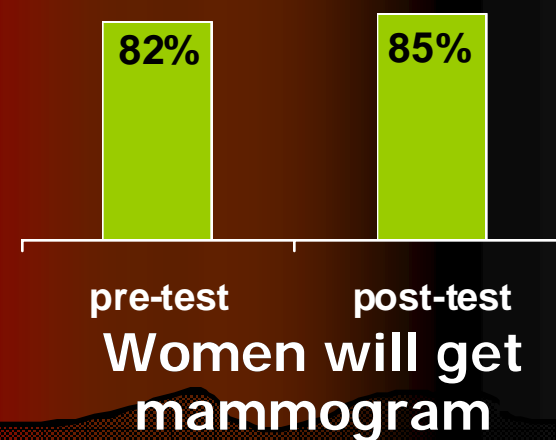
(n=136, 99)



Mastectomy with Pregnancy



Second opinion for cancer treatment



Women will get mammogram

(n=185, 194)

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