

A Q&A with Dr. Susan Love

BY KATIE GRASSO

Dr. Susan Love will be the keynote speaker when the 2007 Advocates of Hope: Raising Cancer Awareness in the Business Community Lecture Series comes to Ruddertowne in Dewey Beach on Sept. 18. Love has devoted her career to women's health. A clinical professor of surgery at UCLA and the founder of the Delaware-based LLuminari, she authored *Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book*, which has been called "the bible for women with breast cancer" by the *New York Times*. Love, one of the pioneers of the breast cancer advocacy movement, speaks with *Delaware Business* about diagnosis, treatment and where she thinks cancer research should be heading.

Q: What is your advice for women who are newly diagnosed with breast cancer?

A: The first thing I would say is to take a deep breath. The mistake that women who are newly diagnosed with breast cancer make is to panic and feel like it's an emergency, and they need to do an immediate treatment. Breast cancer is not an emergency. You have time to read and figure out what is the best approach for you. Do not rush into a treatment.

Q: What is the biggest challenge facing working women who have breast cancer?

A: I think one of the things that worries working women is "am I going to be able to work while I'm getting the treatment?" This causes women to make

unwise decisions, like having a mastectomy because they think radiation will interfere with work. So I think the important message is that most women can continue to work without any problems while receiving treatments for breast cancer. Sometimes schedules might need to be modified a little, but it generally should be OK to work.

Q: What can employers do to help employees who are cancer patients?

A: I think it's important [for employers to] let the employees know that they're supportive and that they realize treatment is a temporary period of time. Work with the employee to accommodate their medical schedule. For example, if they are getting chemotherapy, they are not going to feel well a day or two later. If the employer knows that, they can accommodate.

Q: How have treatment changes helped or hindered women who want to keep working through

their disease and treatment?

A: Not only have chemo and drugs [improved], in addition, the drugs we use to help with side effects have improved. Some types of chemo cause nausea and vomiting. There are good drugs now to take care of those symptoms. Chemotherapy will lower the white cell blood count making you more susceptible to infections. To avoid getting infections, someone may stay home from the workplace. Now we have drugs keeping blood counts



up so that doesn't happen.

Q: What is the biggest obstacle we face in curing breast cancer?

A: Right now, we've gotten just as far as we can get in our current mode. Our efforts have been focused too much on doing the same thing, only slightly better. We need to figure out what causes breast cancer and how to prevent it. There's been very little effort to find the cause. The efforts have been to find what's already there and then how to treat them. What would be better is to figure out what causes it and how to prevent it. We need a shift in our approach.

Q: The Chamber's lecture series is called Advocates of Hope because we wanted to show that hope can go hand in hand with a cancer diagnosis. How important do you think attitude is to coping with cancer?

A: There's no question that attitude has a major affect on how you cope with it – how you deal with your treatments and recovery. A good attitude is probably more beneficial, but you have to be careful – how much can you really change your attitude? If you're the type of person who is more pessimistic, then can you suddenly become positive and optimistic? I don't think so. I think people deal with it in their own way.

The Advocates of Hope 2007 Lecture Series is dedicated to the memory of Brad Hublein of Wilmington Trust, who passed away in 2007 after a three-year battle with leukemia. ■

Register online for the Advocates of Hope event with Dr. Love at www.dsc.com or call (302) 655-7221 to request a faxable registration flyer. Advocates of Hope concludes on October 31 in Dover with Hamilton Jordan, three-time cancer survivor and former chief of staff to President Jimmy Carter. Each Advocates of Hope session has been approved for 1.75 recertification general credit hours toward PHR, SPHR and GPHR recertification through the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI).

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