



**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DIVISION OF THE RATEPAYER ADVOCATE
31 CLINTON STREET, 11TH FL
P. O. BOX 46005
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07101**

JAMES E. MCGREEVEY
Governor

SEEMA M. SINGH, ESQ.
*Director
and Ratepayer Advocate*

News Release

**For Immediate Release
March 10, 2004**

**For Further Information
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Ratepayer Advocate Seema M. Singh & Robert Wood Johnson To Hold Major Health Event in Hamilton, NJ, to Fight Breast Cancer

Hamilton, NJ – Ratepayer Advocate Seema M. Singh and the staff of the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, Hamilton Campus, announced a major health education event in central New Jersey, “How to Detect and Prevent Breast Cancer & Other Health Related Issues.”

“This is the first in a series of urgent and important meetings initiated by Governor James E. McGreevey in the fight against breast cancer,” Ms. Singh said in announcing the event, which is scheduled for Monday, March 29, 10 a.m.-noon, at the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Auditorium, Outpatient Services Building, Hamilton, NJ.

“Governor McGreevey deserves our support for building a better and healthier New Jersey by taking the lead in promoting women’s health issues,” said Ms. Singh.

In the state budget for the coming fiscal year, the Governor has proposed doubling the funds for the New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED) program that enable women to obtain mammograms. Governor McGreevey’s budget initiative would provide 15,000 additional uninsured women with life-saving mammograms.

Ms. Singh said the March 29th event has three objectives:

- Inform women on how to minimize the risks of and detect breast cancer by learning self-help techniques and other preventative strategies.

- Inform women with inadequate healthcare about affordable and free programs that they can participate in to provide screening, diagnosis and other health services.
- Introduce Governor McGreevey's breast cancer and other health and family initiatives that he has asked the Legislature to adopt and in particular, the bill requiring New Jersey health insurance companies to pay for mammograms for women under 40 when physicians order them. The measure is aimed at ensuring that women under 40, particularly those with a family history of breast cancer, have access to life-saving mammograms.

The March 29th event at Robert Wood Johnson-Hamilton Campus, which will accommodate 60 people, will cover a range of health women's issues. A member of Governor McGreevey's cabinet, Ms. Singh will outline the Governor's proposals benefiting women and other family health issues.

Ms. Singh said, "We are focusing on the prevention of advanced breast cancer, which is possible with regular mammograms, especially for women at high risk, that is, women with a family history of the disease."

Ms. Singh said there is a pressing need to address this issue because, "Unfortunately, New Jersey, along with Texas and Wyoming, are the only states and the District of Columbia not requiring insurance companies to cover mammograms for women of any age when doctors recommend the procedure."

Under New Jersey law, unless Governor McGreevey's proposed legislation is adopted, insurance companies are required only to cover mammograms for women over 40 even if her doctor recommends it is medically necessary.

"The problem is that, for women with a family history of breast cancer, many doctors recommend that mammograms are needed at least 10 years prior to the age when a family member was first diagnosed with cancer. That may mean women as young as 25 should be tested at least annually," Ms. Singh said.

"But, as we know, many of us cannot afford this high cost procedure without insurance, even if it might save lives," Ms. Singh said. "For that reason, Governor McGreevey has proposed the immediate passage of legislation to require insurance companies to cover mammograms for women under 40 whose physicians recommend that yearly mammograms are medically indicated."

Deb Cordello, Chief Operating Officer, of Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, Hamilton, will deliver the opening remarks.

Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein, co-sponsor of the legislation requiring health insurers to pay for mammograms for women under 40 on a doctor's recommendation, will discuss how to support the bill's passage.

Other speakers include, Dr. Michael Kane, Clinical Director of Medical Oncology, RWJH Cancer Institute, who will present an overview of the cancer programs and services provided by the hospital. Dr. Antonio Sison, Medical Director of Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at the hospital, will discuss programs projecting toward the health of women, including services for women on limited incomes.

There will also be a panel discussion that will show women how to do breast self-examinations, diet issues that affect women's health, and financial assistance programs.

Ms. Singh urged women in the central New Jersey area to register to attend the health education event at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital-Hamilton Campus on March 29th.

The full agenda for the event and the registration form to attend can be found on the Ratepayer Advocate's website, www.rpa.state.nj.us. They are also attached.

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**HOW TO DETECT AND PREVENT BREAST CANCER
AND OTHER HEALTH RELATED ISSUES**

**A PROGRAM SPONSORED BY THE NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF THE RATEPAYER
ADVOCATE AND THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON HOSPITAL AT HAMILTON**

Monday, March 29, 2004, 10 a.m. - Noon
at the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital
Hamilton Auditorium Outpatient Services Building
Hamilton, New Jersey

PROGRAM AGENDA

Greetings: **Deb Cordello, Chief Executive Officer**
Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, Hamilton (RWJHH)

Presentation: **Seema M. Singh, Esq., Ratepayer Advocate, Member,**
Governor McGreevey's Cabinet, The Governor's Proposals Benefiting
Women and Family Health

Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein, Co-sponsor of the
legislation requiring health insurers to pay for mammograms
for women under 40 on MD recommendation: How to support
its passage

Overview: **Dr. Michael Kane, Clinical Director of Medical Oncology,** RWJH
Cancer Institute, The Cancer Programs and Services provided by
Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, Hamilton (RWJHH)

Dr. Antonio Sison, Medical Director, Dept. of Obstetrics and
Gynecology, RWJH programs projecting toward the health of
women, including services for women on limited incomes

Refreshment Break

Panel Discussion

- **Trish Tatrai, RN, Coordinator**, Breast Cancer Program Services, How to Do Breast Self-Examinations
- **Nutrition Expert**, Diet issues that affect women's health
- **Gunda Simpkins, Women Health Educator & Coordinator**, The RWJHH NJ Seed Program, RWJHH

Discussion of medical programs at RWJHH available for women on limited incomes. **Attendees will be invited to sign up** at the end of the meeting for free mammograms, and other free diagnostic services.

Audience Q&A Panelists will be joined by Seema M. Singh, Dr. Kane and Dr. Sison

Adjourn