October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Don’t get me wrong, it’s great that we have an entire month dedicated to raising awareness about breast cancer – the Academy/DPHA highlights the monthly awareness calendars on our website. But let’s not forget the person to whom those breasts are attached.

Is she getting the preventative care she needs in other aspects of her life? Is she seeing her primary care physician and getting her vaccines? Is she visiting her OB/GYN and getting her pap smear? Is she living with other chronic diseases that may need to be checked on? Is she eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and whole grains? Is she drinking enough water? Is she performing enough exercise? Is she getting enough sleep?

Having an entire month devoted to important causes is a great idea, but it breaks us down into parts. Breasts. Cervixes (cervixii?). Lungs. Hearts. Colons. Hair. Testicles. All have months devoted to raising awareness and getting screened. We have months devoted to types of cancers, rare diseases, and common ones.

But I urge you, during this and every awareness month, to look at the whole picture. The whole patient.

Recently, healthcare has begun to update the language we use. Patients are no longer “diabetics,” but “people with diabetes.” We don’t have “cancer patients,” but “patients with cancer.” Someone out there realized that person first language is important. We are more than the sum of our parts. We are more than our disease.

Yes, cancer screening is important, but public health is also making sure a patient got her flu shot, or her pap smear, or had her glaucoma checked, or her colonoscopy. Public health is knowing she has transportation to the doctors’ office, or childcare so she can go to an appointment, or can afford her prescriptions. Public health is all of these things, not just a pink (or orange, or teal, or blue) ribbon.

So, get that mammogram if you haven’t yet, ladies. But also take care of the rest of you. You’re more than just your parts.

Kate Smith, MD, MPH
Program Manager & Clinical Liaison,
Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association

Delaware Mini Medical School

2023 Fall Session

NOW OPEN FOR REGISTRATION!

First session THIS Wednesday 10/4
To register go to our website, or click here to be redirected.

Other Events

APHA’s 2023 Annual Meeting and Expo
Creating the Healthiest Nation: Overcoming Social and Ethical Challenges

The 2023 Annual Meeting and Expo is being held on November 12-15, 2023, in Atlanta, GA! Join fellow public health experts for four days of inspirational speakers, thought-provoking panel discussions, expert leadership advice, and networking opportunities.

Register Here

The Academy/DPHA will once again be hosting a dinner for Delawareans at the meeting. Sunday, November 12, from 6:30-8:30 pm

Please let us know if you’d like to join us!

Delaware Lead Poisoning Prevention Conference
The CAMC Health Education and Research Institute designates this Internet enduring material activity for a maximum of 3.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™.

Scan the QR code, or click here to register.

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