



## California Teachers Association

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## Northern California Cancer Center

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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Largest Study of Teachers in the U.S. Yields Valuable Information about Cancers and Health in Women** *Northern California Cancer Center and collaborating institutions have studied over 133,000 California teachers over the past 15 years*

**BURLINGAME, Calif.** – An ongoing health study of over 133,000 California teachers is leading cancer researchers to some interesting theories that may contribute to discovering the causes and prevention of breast and other cancers. A tribute to the teachers' participation in this research was published in the September issue of the *California Educator* magazine.

The Northern California Cancer Center (NCCC) and collaborators at university medical schools and institutions throughout the state have been conducting research for the aptly named California Teachers Study since it began in 1995. The continuing health study has focused on lifestyle, medical history and women's health, as it follows and surveys the large group of teachers through the years.

“We believe California teachers will be the ‘Harvard nurses’ of the future,” said NCCC researcher Christina Clarke, Ph.D., referring to a landmark study of more than 180,000 nurses that provided a wealth of information about women's reproductive health. “Teachers have given us great data. Since the study began, the teachers in this study have cumulatively filled out about 4.5 million pages of questions, provided around 10,000 biospecimens, and participated in approximately 3,000 interviews.”

Early findings from the study found that teachers have a much lower rate than the general population of cervical cancer, as well as heart disease and lung cancer because they are generally a non-smoking group. Findings also confirmed a concern initially expressed by California teachers themselves that they experienced a higher rate of breast cancer than comparable women in California.

With National Breast Cancer Awareness Month coming up in October, it is important to note that later findings from the study have revealed lifestyle factors that may affect breast cancer risk. The researchers have found that breast cancer risk was higher among women who combined hormone therapy use with more than one alcoholic drink per day. They also found that strenuous, long-term exercise reduced the risk of invasive and in-situ breast cancers.

Some of the survey information is leading Dr. Clarke and the California Teachers Study researchers to new ideas that build upon what has already been important research in the prevention of breast cancer. While the study continues, another one is being planned that continues to involve California teachers and encourages them to play a role in focusing the research project.

Working in collaboration with the Northern California Cancer Center on the California Teachers Study are several other institutions, including the University of California at Irvine, the University of Southern California, and the City of Hope, all of which are conducting research studies that draw from the teacher data. Researchers from NCCC and these other institutions are looking at other factors that may have an impact on cancer, including obesity, diet, second-hand smoke, and air pollution.

“I am so proud of our teachers. Their participation in this important study shows that their influence goes far beyond the classroom,” said CTA President David Sanchez. “The information that thousands of our teachers have provided will one day have a major impact on the health of women worldwide.”

The Northern California Cancer Center is the only center in the country dedicated solely to cancer prevention research. It is recognized nationally as a leader in researching the causes and patterns of cancer across the population and improving the prevention and detection of cancer. For more information, see <http://www.nccc.org>.

The California Educator is the magazine of the 340,000-member California Teachers Association. It can be found online at [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org).

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***The 340,000-member CTA is affiliated with the 3.2 million-member National Education Association.***