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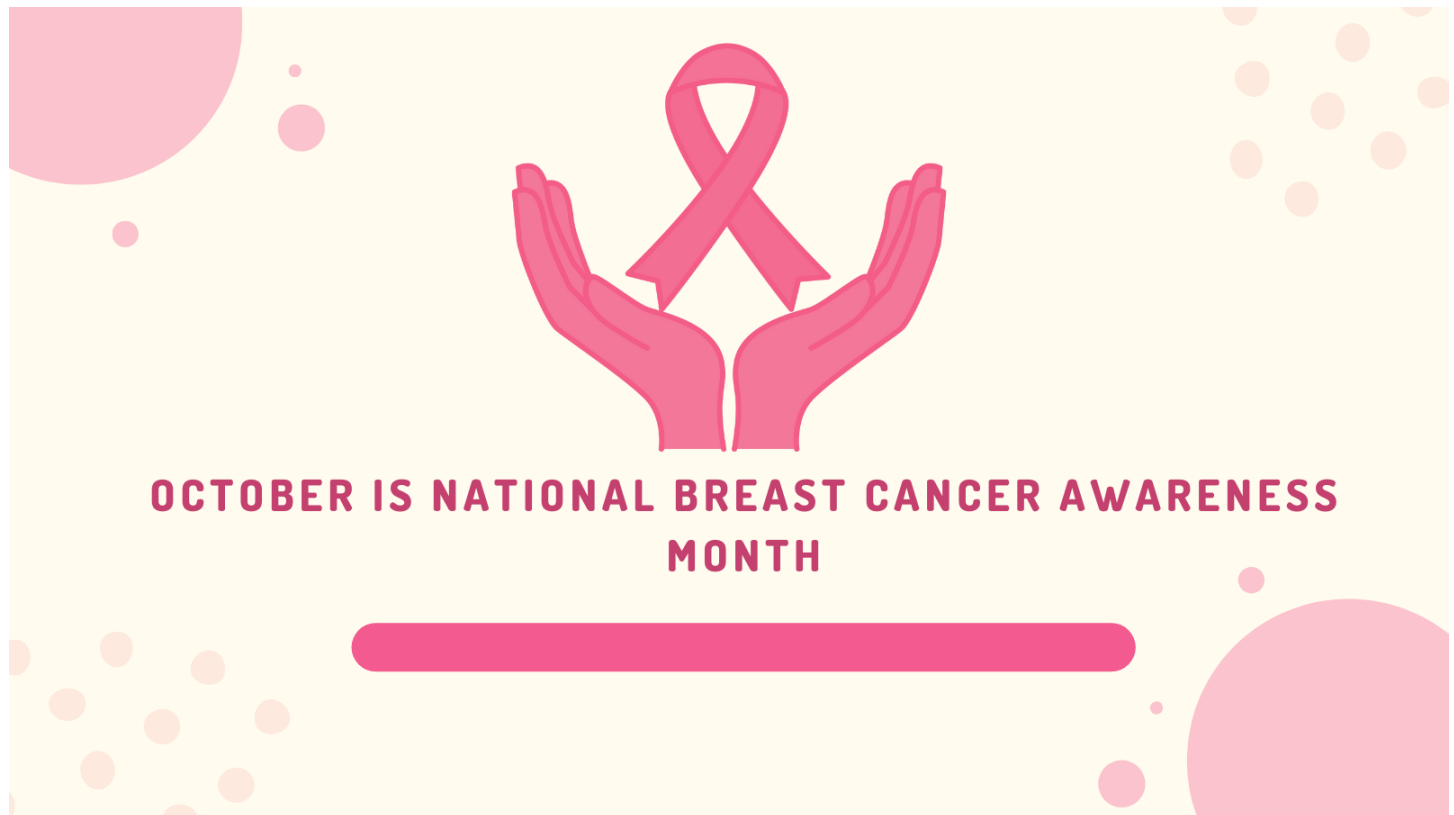
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HSLIC News - LibGuides at University of New Mexico

October is National breast cancer awareness month

by Alexis Ellsworth-Kopkowski on October 21st, 2022 | [o Comments](#)



October is National breast cancer awareness month

While progress has been made regarding breast cancer research and prevention, disparities continue to persist among non-White patients, patients from a rural background, and patients from lower socio-economic status. According to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), outside of COVID-19, cancer is the second leading cause of death in both men and women. With breast, prostate, lung, and colon being the most common.

Image Alt text pink ribbon and hands for breast cancer awareness month

For this blog post I interviewed my mom, JoAnne who has just (thankfully) completed her breast cancer treatments and surgeries.

Was it hard as a rural patient to make all of your appointments? What barriers did you face in that regard?

Looking back on it, I really don't know how we managed to be on time and relatively decent to deal

with for every single appointment. Without my partner, it would have been impossible. I was lucky in that once they changed my chemotherapy mix, I was actually hungry after treatment and so we had lots of lunch dates. The price of gas, lunches and other related expenses are all just a blur in this moment. I couldn't find a decent wig shop near my home and so that was a big expense and investment in time and energy. I got my bras for after surgery online. They were expensive and ugly.

If you could change one thing about the patient care you received, what would you have changed?

I would go to a different facility for chemo and I found a better oncologist who has proven to be a better match for me. The facility was overcrowded and they had no regard for HIPPA. They would take us back to the infusion center two at a time, asking us both questions. Then you were seated so close to each other that there was no privacy. The place was old and dilapidated. I subsequently found a place in a different location that is charming and beautiful. I still have to drive an hour to get there, but I feel that it is well worth it. Relating to your doctor is so important! I asked for a different oncologist because I felt dismissed and rushed every time I met with her.

What would you like other people to know that may be facing a breast cancer diagnosis?

Make your support team early in the process and keep telling them how much you appreciate their love and kindness. I came to love and appreciate my partner on a whole different level. I also had a distant family member who had gone through breast cancer including chemo and surgery. She was very important because I could call her or text her at any time and she made it clear she really wanted to help me. I will love her forever. Know that losing your hair is often the worst part. My loving daughter cut mine short and then buzzed it off. That was a tearful and loving act.

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