

Toronto  22.4°C Light Rain 


RADIO TV

RADIO-CANADA.ca SHOP

Search CBC.ca

Search Web

HEALTH »

Health News Feed

NEWS »

World

Canada

Health

Arts &amp; Entertainment

Technology &amp; Science

Money

Consumer Life

Sports

Diversions

Weather

SERVICES »

Membership Sign-up

Breaking News Alerts

E-mail Newsletters

Video

Podcasts

Mobile/PDA

RSS Feeds

HEALTH

## Breast cancer experts gather to brainstorm on the next research breakthrough

17:40:22 EDT Jun 5, 2006

TERRI THEODORE

VANCOUVER (CP) - For breast cancer expert Dr. Tak Mak tracking down and eliminating the No. 1 cancer killer of women is similar to fighting terrorism.

The only differences, he said, are detectives and spies are doctors and researchers.

"We're collecting data and then we get together and compare notes. We help each other. We form a new task force, we buy new weapons and we kill more of them (cancers)," he said.

Twenty-two experts from as far away as the United Kingdom gathered here Tuesday to brainstorm on advancing the fight against breast cancer.

Mak, who's the director of the Campbell Family Institute for Breast Cancer Research at Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital, said meeting with other experts to search out solutions is more important now than ever.

"Because I think the era of chemotherapy has hit the wall," he said. "The further advance will be to understand exactly how to target each breast cancer patient with a different sharp-shooting cocktail."

Mak said the so-called wonder drug Herceptin is the first major advance in breast cancer care in the last six decades, and he believes there will be more such discoveries with these types of brain-storming sessions.

The B.C. Cancer Agency is hosting the Weekend to End breast Cancer workshop.

The agency's Dr. Sam Aparicio, who is the head of the molecular oncology and breast cancer research program, said these research sessions keep them vigilant by pursuing other therapies and targets.

Aparicio said collaboration is a huge part of discovering cancer cures because "no scientist lives alone."

"The basis for us to be able to do this is to understand what else is happening in the world. Who's doing what. We feed off each others ideas."

Funding for the meeting comes from the almost 2,000 people who walked 60 kilometres around Vancouver last year in the Weekend to End Breast Cancer.

The annual event raised \$5.3 million in 2005.

Anita Cochrane, whose breast cancer spread to her bones, recently wrapped up her chemotherapy.

The 34-year-old accountant told a news conference in the three years between her cancers the therapies and drugs had completely changed.

"That's why I have hope," she said. "That's why I think I can live a long and active life. I'm counting on these doctors."

She plans to walk in this summer's fund-raising event.

Mak calculated the mileage that people walked in the Canadian Weekend to End Breast Cancer events in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver.

"Twenty-five times around the world, can you imagine," he said.

Mak said huge number of participants fundraising for breast cancer puts a new twist on the old saying of walking a mile in someone's shoes.

© The Canadian Press, 2006

