

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
OLDER WOMEN'S LEAGUE
OWL OBSERVER INTERVIEW**

OO: We understand you are about to kick-off an educational program on the importance of mammograms for older women. Why?

HRC: Many of us have seen the statistics, and we know that the risk of breast cancer increases with age. Yet, as I learned during my work on health care reform, nearly two out of three women 65 and older are not getting regular mammograms, in spite of the Medicare benefit that covers a mammogram at least once every two years. This concerns me deeply, and it is why I am kicking off an educational campaign to encourage women to get a mammogram.

OO: Why is it so important for older women to have mammograms? How often should they have them?

HRC: One of the things the President and I tried to emphasize during the health care debate is the importance of preventive health care, not only because it is cost efficient, but because it saves lives. Although we are working on new screening methods, mammography currently is the best weapon we have to detect breast cancer. While there is disagreement in the scientific community as to how often women should get mammograms, everyone agrees that women should get one at least once a year. Women who have special concerns may require more frequent screening. Regular mammograms can detect breast cancer in its early stages when treatment is less likely to require drastic measures and more likely to be successful. A mammogram can also offer women peace of mind, because most often, the results are benign.

OO: What steps have you taken to further understand the reasons many women are not having routine mammography screening?

HRC: This past winter, I met with doctors, nurses, and older women around the country to try to understand why so many women aged 65 and older are not taking advantage of their Medicare benefit, and to explore ways we can encourage them to do so. At these "listening sessions," I learned that many women don't get mammograms because they are afraid of what might be found. Others fear that the procedure is painful and embarrassing or that the radiation might cause cancer. Other women, particularly as they get older, view breast cancer with a sense of fatalism and believe that if they get cancer, it was just meant to be. Still other women have spent their whole lives taking care of their family members and simply don't have experience taking care of their own health. These listening sessions encouraged us to inaugurate a national awareness campaign, and the insights of each and every participant have been enormously helpful.

OO: We find that many women are not screened because it was never recommended by their doctor. How will you address this?

HRC: Many older women told us they would be more likely to get a mammogram if their doctors recommended the procedure. While many of them see a series of specialists for various health problems, they rarely if ever see a primary care physician. Because many specialists don't see it as part of their role to remind patients to get mammograms, many older women never hear about mammography from their doctors. To address this issue, we have spoken with health care professionals and organizations and enlisted their help in getting doctors to join us in our campaign by talking to their patients about the importance of regular mammography. Because the only doctors many older women regularly visit are specialists, we have reached out to those health care professionals whose specialties are not typically associated with breast health.

OO: Did you find any similarities or discrepancies that were consistent among certain demographic groups with regard to race, income, geographic region, urban/rural communities, etc.?

HRC: The women I spoke with had a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and each had a compelling and enlightening story to tell. While I personally did not take note of specific demographic trends, Medicare data reveals that African-American women use mammography less than white women. Research also suggests that rural women may get fewer mammograms than urban women. As part of our mammography awareness campaign, we will make this kind of data available to grassroots organizations and state and local agencies so they can identify and reach out to the communities that are in need of our support.

OO: What programs will you put in place to encourage older women to have routine mammograms?

HRC: We are launching our nationwide mammography awareness initiative with the "Mamagram" campaign in honor of Mother's Day. The campaign will feature public service announcements, informational brochures about mammography and the Medicare benefit in Spanish and English, and a "mammography kit" that includes sample newsletter articles and posters. FTD florists, chain drug store pharmacists, and grocery stores will distribute or display messages encouraging older women to get mammograms. The "mamagrams" themselves -- mammography reminders to an older woman from a loved one -- will be available at card stores and FTD florists, ready to be slipped into Mother's Day cards and flower arrangements.

The awareness campaign will go on after Mother's Day, as information and encouragement continue to reach older women and their health care providers through Medicare carriers and intermediaries, state and local aging agencies and health departments, and voluntary and professional organizations. Grandparents Day in September and October, Breast Cancer

Awareness Month, are also likely to be highlights of the campaign.

OO: How can OWL members help?

HRC: By printing this interview in the Observer, you have already contributed by helping get the word out. The most important things you can do, however, is to spread the word among your friends, and try to learn more about available options and services.

OWL members can also take action in your own communities. Learn what the needs are, and contact local organizations and businesses that might be willing to help the education effort. For further information, members can call the Office of Beneficiary Services at the Health Care Financing Administration at (202) 690-6113. The success of the awareness campaign depends on the enthusiasm and participation of people like OWL members. Tell your friends, tell your neighbors, tell your sisters: Get a mammogram. It's a picture that can save your life.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

done

January 26, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR LISA CAPUTO AND MELANNE VERVEER

FROM: Debbie Fine

SUBJECT: Attached request from the Older Women's League

Attached is a request from the Older Women's League for an interview with the First Lady to appear in their bimonthly newsletter. As stated in the request, the interview could either focus on mammograms to tie in with your office's current effort, or a range of other issues of interest to older women. They are open to whatever issues and format your office would prefer. (They would be happy to submit questions that we answer in writing for them to print.) The newsletter reaches a readership of 20,000.

Please let me know if you are interested. I can be reached at x66455. Thanks for your help.

cc: Mike Lux
Barbara Woolley ✓
Flo McAfee

O·W·L

MEMORANDUM

TO: Debbie Fine
White House Office of Public Liaison
FR: Deborah Briceland-Betts
Executive Director
DT: January 20, 1995
RE: Requested Interview with Mrs. Clinton

Following on our conversation, this memo provides some background information on the Older Women's League (OWL) and on suggested topics for my proposed interview with Mrs. Clinton.

As you know, OWL is the national grassroots, membership organization that mobilizes individuals on behalf of midlife and older women. Our members advocate at the local, state and national levels on a spectrum of concerns which women confront as they age, including:

- access to affordable health care which meets women's needs throughout life, including long-term care coverage;
- economic security and independence to ensure that financial inequities early in life do not doom women to poverty in retirement;
- the end to violence against women and the elderly; and
- the elimination of workplace discrimination.

The interview, as we discussed, would be a series of questions about the importance of mammograms for older women and highlight the under-utilization of the Medicare screening and diagnostic benefit.

The interview would be reported in OWL's bimonthly newsletter, the *OWL Observer*, which reaches a national audience of 20,000 readers including: OWL members, friends and supporters of OWL, members of Congress, reporters and editors-- particularly those who cover women's, health, and aging issues.

The majority of our members are women in their fifties and older who are dedicated to creating a better future for all women through membership in our national advocacy and education network. Many are community leaders who shape the agenda of a number of local organizations.

OWL members value Mrs. Clinton's presence in the White House as a voice for women of all ages. We would welcome this opportunity to directly present Mrs. Clinton's views to our readers.

Older Women's League

666 11th Street NW, Suite 700 • Washington DC 20001 • (202)783-6686 • (202)638-2356 FAX

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FAX TRANSMISSION

DATE: 2-22-95TO: Karen Finney White HouseFAX NUMBER: 456-7805FROM: Deb Briceland-Betts

at Fax number 202/638-2356

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2

COMMENTS/INSTRUCTIONS:

O·W·L**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Karen Finney, White House
FR: Deb Briceland-Betts, Older Women's League
RE: Interview with First Lady for *Owl Observer*
DT: February 22, 1995

Thank you for agreeing to answer questions for our national newsletter. We are simply trying to showcase the First Lady's effort to highlight the mammography benefit under Medicare. We hope that the following questions provide that opportunity. Please feel free to elaborate.

Our deadline is short. ~~Can we possibly have these back by Wednesday, March 1st?~~ We also need a photo.

- OO: We understand that you are about to kick-off an educational program on the importance of mammograms for older women. Why?
- OO: Why is it so important for older women to have mammograms? How often should they have them?
- OO: What steps have you taken to further understand the reasons many women are not have routine mammography screening?
- OO: We find that many women are not screened because it was never recommended by their doctor. How will you address this?
- OO: Did you find any similarities or discrepancies that were consistent among certain demographic groups with regard to race, income, geographic region, urban/rural communities, etc.?
- OO: Will you share any personal stories that particularly touched you?
- OO: What program will you put in place to encourage older women to have routine mammagrams?
- OO: How can OWL members help?