

HB 2660 – Breast Reconstruction Education for Cancer Patients

1 in 8 women are diagnosed with breast cancer. In 2016 alone, there were **246,660 new cases**. African American women under the age of 40 have the highest rate of breast cancer, and it is also the most common cancer among Latino women.

Yet nearly 70% of women are not informed of their options.

The Women’s Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 (WHCRA) requires health plans that offer breast cancer coverage to also provide for breast reconstruction and prostheses.

Since 1998, health plans that offer breast cancer coverage have been required to provide for breast reconstruction and prostheses. Surprisingly, published studies report that 70% of women eligible for breast reconstruction following breast cancer are often not informed of their care options, especially women of racial and ethnic minority groups.

Only 33% of eligible women with breast cancer undergo breast reconstruction

Published research reports that many women, particularly those of racial and ethnic minority groups, are not informed of their care options. There is no consensus on the reasons women do not receive this information. However, some research has shown that the two main reasons why women did not undergo breast reconstruction were that they were not informed of their options and they were not referred to a breast reconstruction surgeon.

Disparities in breast reconstruction education

While the passage of the Women’s Health Care Rights Act has increased the availability of reconstruction to a diverse population, a disparity still exists. A recent study found that African-American, Latina, and older women (45 to 64) are less likely to receive immediate breast reconstruction than Caucasian and younger women (45 years), respectively. It remains concerning that differences based on race and age continue, even with a national focus on the elimination of health disparities based on race and age.

HB 2660 directs DCBS and OHA to provide educational materials via links from non-profit organizations to their individual webpages. These educational materials will provide breast cancer patients with resources focusing on the options that are available to breast cancer patients for federally mandated insurance coverage of breast reconstruction surgery, breast prostheses and breast forms.