



‘The mammography bus’

Catching the bus to better health in Japan

At a glance

Issue

- Breast cancer death rate is increasing in Japan

Objectives

- Support government efforts to organize a nationwide system for early detection of breast cancer among women over 40
- Meet the growing and unmet testing needs of women over 40

Activities

- 'Mammography bus' offering free breast cancer checks to women in six major cities in 2006 and seven cities in 2007
- Educational campaigns on breast cancer, working with the media in each 'bus stop,' including 'consulting hours' offered by breast cancer specialists
- Press conference and free breast cancer tests for female journalists
- Internal communications campaign to reach female Novartis associates and wives of male associates

Results

- 686 women received free breast cancer checks in 2006, with approximately 8 per cent expected to need further testing and possible treatment
- Recognition of Novartis as an active partner in tackling a national health issue
- Positive press coverage

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Catching the bus to better health

Novartis Japan has found a novel way to bring healthcare closer to the people: sponsoring a mammography bus to offer free breast cancer checks to women nationwide. Launched in 2006, the Novartis Mammography Bus had provided free tests to 686 women in six major cities, out of a total of 2 418 who had applied. Early results indicated about 8 per cent of the women needed a more detailed check and possible treatment. In 2007, the bus is scheduled to visit seven cities and offer free checks to 840 women.

Complementing government efforts to curb the increasing incidence of breast cancer, Novartis Japan created the 'mammography bus' to offer free checks to women over 40. This corporate citizenship initiative aims to increase the rate of early disease detection in Japan.

The number of breast cancer patients in Japan is increasing rapidly, with annual increase of 40 000 new patients. Currently 11 000 women die from the disease every year. The rising numbers have caused the Japanese government to develop incentive programs to encourage local authorities to purchase mammography equipment for their clinics, seeking to curb the disease by increasing the likelihood of early detection and cure rates. Currently less than 10 per cent of women over 40 in Japan receive regular mammograms, an extremely low percentage when compared with 70-80 per cent of this same demographic in Europe and the United States.

In 2006, Novartis Japan decided to complement the government's preventive measures by organizing a mammography bus tour throughout the country. An internal kick-off event in April 2006 at the Tokyo head office was attended by Dr. David Epstein, President and CEO of Novartis Oncology, as well as Novartis Japan Pharma's top management.

Over a six month period, the bus decorated with Novartis logo and a pink ribbon, and equipped with mammography equipment visited popular shopping centers in six major cities for two to three days each. In 2007, the bus is scheduled to visit seven cities.

Mammograms are performed by members of the Breast Cancer Research Group, a not-for-profit group organized by doctors specializing in this type of oncology.

TV and radio broadcasts and advertisements in newspapers and magazines in local communities the bus visits offer educational information on the importance of regular tests to the early detection of breast cancer. Women at each of the Novartis Mammography Bus stops answer questionnaires on breast cancer awareness, and passersby receive pamphlets on breast cancer and mammograms.

Of the women who received free checks, 50 per cent had a breast cancer patient among their family members and close friends. Over 97 per cent of those who received the test said they would take regular checks in the future.

Some 30 women journalists received free breast cancer checks on the Novartis Mammography Bus in May 2006 and 2007 at a press event. The event generated articles and reports on the importance of early detection.

Business case

Corporate social responsibility has become a key basis for assessing companies in Japan-not only for stakeholders such as investors and doctors, but also for students seeking employment, patients and families searching for information on breast cancer and treatment, and the mass media.

The Novartis Mammography Bus project has been praised among doctors and medical journalists. As a corporate citizenship initiative that is closely connected to the core business of Novartis, the mammography bus has brought concrete benefits including:

- Meeting the growing and unmet needs of women over 40 – the most vulnerable age group for breast cancer.
- Supporting government efforts for health education, which exemplified a key aspect of corporate citizenship.
- Partnering with the media to organize an educational campaign, which has generated a better understanding of the disease and its prevention.
- Working with key opinion leader doctors to educate the public on the importance of regular checks for early detection of breast cancer through a media campaign.

About Novartis Japan

Novartis Japan ranks as the group's second largest market worldwide. Business activities include pharmaceuticals, generics and OTC products. At the end of 2006, the company employed 3 682 associates.

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