



## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **THE STATE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA** *Almost 20 Percent of Women in Southeastern Pennsylvania Are in Fair or Poor Health*

**PHILADELPHIA** – National Women's Health Week, observed annually in May, encourages women to make their health a priority. In honor of this year's celebration (May 12–18), the PHMC Center for Data Innovation's Community Health Data Base (CHDB) has released exclusive data from the 2012 Household Health Survey on the health of women age 18 years or older in Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA).

“According to the Department of Health and Human Services, Pennsylvania is among the worst states in high death rates among women due to cancer, particularly for breast cancer and colorectal cancer,”\* says Amy Clark, research associate at the PHMC Center for Data Innovation. Other major causes of death among females in Pennsylvania include heart disease and diabetes. And when it comes to preventive care measures for women, Pennsylvania is ranked in the middle range of US states.\*\*

Erika Shea, a nurse practitioner the PHMC Care Clinic, often treats women with chronic conditions. Recently, she treated a 62-year-old female with serious health issues and a chronic cough. “She was on five different medications, including two inhalers,” recalls Shea. “I told her she had to quit smoking.” With Shea's help, the client successfully quit smoking and no longer requires medications to help her breathe. “It was encouraging to help one client live smoke-free. It can be difficult to convince women to focus on their own health, instead of taking care of the health of others.”

### **Regional Landscape**

In SEPA, women account for 54.1% of the population. The majority of women are white (61.1%), while non-Hispanic black women are the largest minority population at 22.7%, followed by Latino women (10.6%). While the majority of women have health insurance (92%), approximately 132,600 women have no private or public health insurance. In addition, more than one in eight women (12.8%) live below 100% of the poverty guidelines.

## **Health Status of Women**

Self-reported health status is one of the best indicators of population health. This measure has consistently shown to correlate strongly with mortality rates.\*\*\* In SEPA, the majority (82.8%) of adult women rate their health as excellent, very good or good. However, a sizable percentage (17.2%) of women report fair or poor health, representing 291,400 women.

High blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, cancer and mental health conditions are common illnesses that require ongoing care. In SEPA, many women suffer from these conditions:

- More than three in 10 women (31.2%) have high blood pressure.
- More than 480,000 women (29.3%) are overweight and an additional 29.6% or approximately 484,100 are obese.
- Approximately 12% of women in SEPA have been diagnosed with diabetes. Without the intervention of a healthy diet and appropriate exercise, this percentage could continue to increase due to the large number of overweight and obese women in the area.
- Nearly two in 10 women (18.7%) suffer from asthma. Approximately 317,800 women in SEPA have been diagnosed with a mental health condition and over 150,700 had cancer in the past.

## **Preventive Health Screenings**

“Regular health screenings, such as mammograms and Pap tests, are vital to the early detection of diseases,” says Clark. “Many preventive screenings have been recognized as a cost-effective way to identify and treat potential health problems before they develop or worsen.”\*\* According to Clark, early detection can not only improve the chances for treatment and cure, but also help women to live longer, healthier lives. Other screenings and routine care can help women lower their risk for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, mental health illnesses, sexually transmitted infections and other conditions. However, in SEPA an increasing number of women are not receiving appropriate health screenings:

- In 2012, four in ten women (41.9%) did not have a Pap test within the past year, representing more than 697,000 women.
- One-third of women (33%) did not receive a breast exam in the past year, representing 553,000 women.
- More than 418,100 women over the age of 40 (36.7%) did not have a mammogram in the past year.
- More than eight in 10 women over the age of 50 (82.2%) did not receive a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy to screen for colorectal cancer in the past year, representing more than 719,300 women.

“The health of families and communities are closely tied to the health of women,” says Clark. “While women’s health issues have attained higher visibility in recent decades, there is still a need to educate and encourage women to improve their physical and mental health and lower

their risk for diseases by visiting a healthcare professional for regular checkups and preventive screenings. “

***For more information about these findings, contact Amy Clark at [aclark@phmc.org](mailto:aclark@phmc.org).***

\*Health Disparities Profiles, 2011 Edition. Washington, DC: DHHS Office on Women’s Health. 2011. Retrieved from [http://www.healthstatus2020.com/disparities/images/Introduction\\_Disparities3.pdf](http://www.healthstatus2020.com/disparities/images/Introduction_Disparities3.pdf)

\*\*[http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/resources/preventative\\_screening.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/resources/preventative_screening.htm)

\*\*\*Idler EL, Benyamini Y. Self-Rated Health and Mortality: A Review of Twenty-Seven Community Studies. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 1997: 21–37.

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### **About the PHMC Center for Data Innovation**

The PHMC Center for Data Innovation offers full-service research capabilities focused on improving community health in the Delaware Valley. Using refined data collection technologies and tools to improve accessibility and timeliness of data, the PHMC Center for Data Innovation works toward improving decision making, planning more effective programs, innovating and measuring community impact. The center includes the Community Health Data Base and other research initiatives at PHMC. To access key findings from the Household Health Survey, visit [www.chdbdata.org](http://www.chdbdata.org). For more information about the PHMC Center for Data Innovation, contact Francine Axler at [francine@phmc.org](mailto:francine@phmc.org) or visit [www.phmc.org](http://www.phmc.org).

### **About PHMC**

Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) is a nonprofit public health institute that creates and sustains healthier communities. PHMC uses best practices to improve community health through direct service, partnership, innovation, policy, research, technical assistance and a prepared workforce. PHMC has served the region since 1972. For more information on PHMC, visit [www.phmc.org](http://www.phmc.org).