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FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE
October 19, 2010

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***HARC Research Shows Many Women Still Not Thinking “Pink”
When it Comes to Breast Cancer Screening and Testing***

(PALM DESERT, CA) – Despite the National Football League and numerous other corporate partners wearing pink to promote Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the number of women foregoing screening and examinations – especially those in Eastern Riverside County – show that staying ahead of this silent killer remains one huge challenge.

Data from the Palm Desert-based Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC), the most recent available for the region, quantifies the problem. Here, an estimated 12,474 of adult females 40 years of age or older that were surveyed reported that they had *never* undergone a mammogram. Furthermore, of those women 40 years and older who reported they have had a mammogram sometime during their life, 25.5% were *not* tested within the last year. This represents 46,218 women.

The HARC data on clinical breast examinations reveals similarly large gaps. Over 18% (54,410) of female respondents indicated they have *never* had a clinical breast exam. Meanwhile, of women that did undergo a clinical breast exam, a total of 24.1 % – or, 55,808 women – have *not* had an exam within the last year.

Medical observers attribute part of the low numbers to the ongoing debate over the types of breast cancer screening and when breast cancer screening should begin.

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According to the US Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF), screening should



begin every other year for women between 50 to 74 years of age. Screening conducted before 50 should be done on an individual basis, based upon personal and family history. The USPSTF is also against health care providers teaching patients how to conduct breast self-examinations.

Conversely, many physicians and organizations disagree with the new recommended guidelines. They favor screening beginning at 40 years of age, and find it valuable to teach women how to conduct breast exams. Many women find masses, which are later diagnosed as breast cancer. Many physicians believe self-exams are one of the best forms of breast cancer screening.

HARC Board President Dr. Glen Grayman said, “Regardless to which school of thought one subscribes, the fact remains that breast cancer is taking far too many lives – and that holds true whether you’re talking about the Coachella Valley or nationally. The numbers are indisputable. Hopefully, they will serve as a catalyst to stimulate dialogue between patients and their doctors about which protocol is right for that individual.”

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 30 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501(c)3 organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities that contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization’s website at www.harcddata.org.