

## Issues - Women's Health

### Women's Health

#### A Leader on Women's Health Issues

As an outspoken supporter of increased efforts in women's health research and services, Rep. Slaughter has worked throughout her entire career in Congress to educate her colleagues, women, and the public at large about the importance of these issues and to craft legislative initiatives to improve women's health.

Rep. Slaughter's activities on women's health have ranged from breast cancer research to genetic non-discrimination to advocacy and education. As a member of the House Budget Committee in the early 1990s, she was responsible for securing passage of the first \$500 million dedicated to breast cancer research, as well as substantial increases in following years. She sponsored the first legislation dedicated to increasing education and research on diethylstilbestrol, or DES, an anti-miscarriage drug prescribed until 1971 that has had serious health consequences for many of the children exposed in utero. Rep. Slaughter's other projects have addressed issues including female genital mutilation, the impact of the environment on women's health, colorectal cancer, and eating disorders.

As a recognized leader on women's health issues,

Rep. Slaughter has received a number of awards for her work on women's health, including the Society for Women's Health Research achievement award for dedication to women's health, the American Public Health Association Distinguished Public Health Legislator Award, the International Health Awareness Network honor for "lifelong commitment to women's equality" and the National Breast Cancer Coalition award for recognition of leadership in the fight against breast cancer. In addition, Rep. Slaughter has appeared on television programs and spoken to many organizations about women's health issues.

## Women's Health Initiatives in the 110th Congress

Based on emerging research on the potential impact of environmental toxins on women's health, Rep. Slaughter has authored two important bills: The Environmental Hormone Disruption Act and the Women's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Act. The Environmental Hormone Disruption Act authorizes the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) to conduct a comprehensive program to research and educate the public on the health effects of hormone-disrupting chemicals. The Women's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Act authorizes the NIEHS to establish multidisciplinary research centers to investigate how environmental factors may be related to women's health and disease prevention.

Congresswoman Slaughter joined with her colleagues in calling on the FDA to approve the HPV vaccine. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cervical cancer strikes more than 15,000 women in the United States each year. The primary cause of cervical cancer is certain high-risk strains of the human papilloma virus, or HPV. FDA approved the first HPV vaccine in 2006. This new vaccine targets cervical cancers associated with HPV is 100% effective, and could prevent the development of a disease that causes 12 percent of cancer deaths in women worldwide. Even more promising is that fact that this vaccine can be administered to both females and males to effect prevention of the disease.

## Women's Health Initiatives in previous Congresses

Rep. Slaughter sponsored the successfully-enacted DES Education and Research Amendments of 1993, providing for public health education, health professional training, and additional research on the long-term health effects of exposure to DES, a drug administered to women to prevent miscarriage but discovered to have devastating health consequences for many of the mothers and their children exposed in utero. She also authored follow-up legislation to extend and expand these programs, the DES Education and Research Amendments of 1997, which was passed and signed into law in October 1998.

Rep. Slaughter secured passage of the Eating Disorders Information and Education Act, which was included in the 1998 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Departments funding legislation. Eating disorders information is now included in prominent federal health education campaigns such as healthfinder.gov, the National Women's Health Information Center, and GirlPower! Rep. Slaughter followed up by urging the Federal Trade Commission to establish consistent regulations for advertising in the commercial weight loss industry in order to reduce deceptive claims.

In 1995, Rep. Slaughter sponsored legislation requiring a review of all Federal programs that assess or mitigate the risks to women's health from environmental exposures, and for a study of the research needs of the Federal Government relating to such risks.

Similar language was included in pesticides reform legislation that passed Congress and became law in September 1996.

Because colorectal cancer receives too little attention, Rep. Slaughter has addressed the need for prevention, education, and awareness. She has led efforts requiring insurance companies to cover screening tests for colorectal cancer, in part because too many women remain unaware that colorectal cancer strikes women and men with equal

frequency. In 1997, Rep. Slaughter requested a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) report on colorectal cancer, the number three cancer killer of American men and women, in order to lead public education and awareness efforts. As a result of that report, she called on HHS to launch a new public awareness campaign on colorectal cancer. This language was included in the 1998 omnibus appropriations package and the campaign was launched in March 1999.

Rep. Slaughter requested a report from the Department of Health and Human Services on the continuing prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the United States in an attempt to find the best ways to discourage this practice. She has also been responsible for the passage of legislative language directing the Department of Health and Human Services to continue and intensify its efforts to educate immigrant communities in the U.S. about the health dangers posed by this practice.