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BREAST cancer. It is probably the disease every woman fears most. According to Pride Foundation – a charity body that aims to enhance awareness efforts and improve accessibility to treatment and care of breast cancer – this disease afflicts more than one million women in the world each year and is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women worldwide, after lung cancer.

Pride's official website also states that Chinese women seem to be at greatest risk, with an incidence rate of 59.7 per 100,000; followed by Indian women (55.8 per 100,000) and Malay women (33.9 per 100,000). It also declares that the disease affects one in 19 women in Malaysia.

Thus, organisations like Pride feel women should be better educated on the disease and perform self-examinations regularly. Early detection saves lives – that's the bottom line.

October is recognised internationally as breast cancer awareness month and every year, charity bodies, private organisations and celebrities go all out to do their bit in promoting the importance of early detection.

Last year, Academy award-winning actress Reese Witherspoon, who is also the honorary chairperson for the Avon Foundation (which is committed to improving the lives of women and their families), participated in the Avon Walk held in Washington. In an exclusive write-up for CNN, Witherspoon tells that "everyone is susceptible to breast cancer" and also reports that every three minutes in the United

Examine yourself, save your life

This month, organisations and individuals come together to battle a malignant tumour that attacks both men and women. Are you doing your part?

States, a woman is diagnosed with the disease.

"Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam by a health professional at least once every three years, and women 40 and older should have an exam every year.

"I am passionate about fighting this devastating disease. I fight for my mother, myself, my children and future generations of women, so one day we will not have to be afraid of breast cancer.

"I began my fight by learning important first steps in breast cancer detection, and will not end my fight until every woman can stand together saying we are breast cancer free," she declares in that article.

The Estée Lauder

Companies' (ELC) initiated the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign in 1992 and Evelyn Lauder, Senior Corporate VP Estée Lauder Companies, and Alexander Penney then editor of *Self* magazine, developed the pink ribbon, which has become the worldwide symbol of breast health.

Presently, the campaign reaches across 70 countries and "represents the most significant and influential campaign ever instituted to educate women worldwide about the need for early detection and treatment of breast cancer."

It also continues to illuminate hundreds of famous buildings, monuments and landmarks in glowing pink around the world. The initiative began in 2000 to spread the "life saving message" and last year, over 200 landmarks were illuminated including Malaysia's KL Tower.

This year, the prominent structure was again lit up at 7pm yesterday following ELC's "Walk for World Pink" charity walk at 5pm.

In May, local handbag label gin & Jacqie held a bag print design competition to create breast health awareness. The contest ended in July and the winning design entitled "Love



Gin & Jacqie's winning entry called Love & Faith.



The illuminated KL Tower is Estée Lauder Companies' bid to send out a strong message on breast cancer awareness.

and Faith" by Zuhaili Akmal Ismail is now on sale at Isetan KLCC, Isetan The Gardens, Tangs Pavilion KL and online at www.ginjacqie.com and www.emmagem.com.

All profits from the sale of the bag, priced at RM18 each, will be donated to the Breast Cancer Welfare Association.

Fabric Softener Softlan joins in the fight against breast cancer. They will set aside 10 sen from every sale of the 2L charity bottle this month and proceeds will be going to National Cancer Society of Malaysia, Breast Cancer Welfare Association and National Cancer Institute (Makna).

These companies and individuals are playing their part in creating the necessary awareness and emphasis on the importance of early detection. So let's not have their efforts come to nothing. Conduct self-checks, whether you're male or female.

Prevention is, after all, better than cure.