



Actress Blythe Danner Films PSA, Gives Interviews on Screening and Early Detection of Oral Cancer

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LOS ANGELES, Calif., Oct. 22 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Actress Blythe Danner, a star in the new Showtime television series "Huff" and widow of the late producer/director Bruce Paltrow, recently donated her time to create a television public service announcement on behalf of the Oral Cancer Foundation, a non-profit organization that promotes annual screenings and early detection to reduce the death rate from the disease that claimed her husband in 2002. The PSAs will begin airing on television stations nationwide in October and November.

At the time of the PSA filming, TV shows Entertainment Tonight and Insider filmed interviews with Danner in which the actress, mother of actress Gwyneth Paltrow, and writer-director Jake Paltrow, explains her drive for awareness about oral cancer, which strikes approximately 30,000 Americans annually. Only half of those diagnosed with it will survive five years -- that's a death rate of one person every hour of each day. The message -- that if found early the cancer is highly survivable, and that an annual screening for the disease should be part of everyone's medical routine -- is the focus of her statement.

The PSA was a collaboration involving effort from longtime Hollywood personalities including Danner, writer-producer Eric Lapidus, producer-director Scott Winant, assisting Oral Cancer Foundation founder Brian Hill. All donated their time and assets to make the PSA possible. Even the film crew of Winant and Danner's new TV series, Huff, donated their lunchtime on the set to film the PSA. "I was really touched by how everyone came together to make this possible," says Hill, "from award-winning Hollywood heavyweights to the sound technicians, camera operators, and set hands, everyone pitched in to bring this project to fruition. The generous donation of their time and talents made this project possible."

"Neither Bruce nor I knew much about oral cancer, so we didn't know to get him to a doctor when his voice became increasingly hoarse," Danner says in the public service announcement. "He was so busy that he didn't seek help for months -- and by then his cancer was very advanced. I wish we had known more. My hope is this PSA will bring oral cancer awareness to more Americans."

The death rate for oral cancer is higher than that of many we routinely hear about such as cervical cancer, prostate cancer, or skin cancer (malignant melanoma), reports the Newport Beach, California-based Oral Cancer Foundation. The death toll is particularly high because lack of public awareness, combined with infrequent opportunistic screenings for it, result in a disease that in two-thirds of cases, is found as a late-stage, advanced cancer. Chances for recovery at this stage are significantly worse than if oral cancer is caught early. Death rates from cancers such as those of the cervix, skin, and prostate, have decreased as annual checks have been adopted for them -- this could also be the case with oral cancer, if the simple and painless screening procedure were to be adopted as a routine part of dental or medical examinations.

"We're grateful to have someone of the caliber of Blythe Danner promote the cause of routine oral cancer screening," said Hill, "I believe that as an actress she is at the top of her craft and an American treasure. This is one of the purest examples of altruistic, celebrity power being used to better peoples lives."

"Discussing her painful experience openly with the public was clearly not an easy task", says Hill, "But in spite of that, Blythe has done an extraordinary thing by channeling her personal loss into good for others. Her message will have a direct, measurable impact. When people see her saying 'I wish we had known more about this, and that annual screenings should be part of their health routine, it will become an idea that viewers retain. The next time they see their doctor or dentist, they'll ask about getting screened. Early detection will save lives".

The Oral Cancer Foundation, founded by oral cancer survivor Brian R. Hill, is a non-profit 501(c) 3, public service charity that provides information, support, and advocacy related to this disease. It maintains a web site at <http://www.oralcancer.org>, which receives millions of hits per month. At the forefront of this year's agenda is the drive to promote solid awareness in the minds of the American public about the need to undergo an annual oral cancer screening, and an outreach to the dental community to provide this service as a matter of routine practice. Supporting the foundation's goals is a scientific advisory board composed of leading cancer authorities from varied medical and dental specialties, and from prominent cancer educational, treatment, and research institutions in the United States.

Media information: Any members of the media that would like Beta SP tapes of the 60 second PSA, transcripts, or the PSA in other formats such as QuickTime for web use, may contact the foundation and receive one at no charge for unlimited use by emailing info@oralcancerfoundation.org


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