Breast cancer is the leading cancer diagnosis among women worldwide, accounting for 1 in 4 cancers diagnosed. The majority of cases are among women living in low and middle-income countries. I review reasons why we are not already acting to prevent breast cancer in the broader population. I will review drivers of breast cancer risk including growth and development before a woman has her first pregnancy. The role of vegetable protein and fibre in childhood and adolescence offers substantial potential for lifelong reduction in breast cancer risk. Alcohol intake before first pregnancy also increases risk of premalignant and invasive breast cancers. Higher physical activity in adolescence and young adult years also offers long-term protection. These data support a greater focus of our prevention efforts earlier in life when risk accumulation is most rapid. Waiting till menopause is too late as by age 50, 23% of all cancers have already been diagnosed. Prevention messages and strategies will be reviewed.

Professor Graham Colditz
Deputy Director, Institute for Public Health; Chief of the Division of Public Health Sciences and Niess-Gain Professor of Surgery, Washington University School of Medicine, Siteman Cancer Centre, St Louis, USA

Professor Colditz is an internationally recognized leader in cancer prevention. As an epidemiologist and public health expert, he has a longstanding interest in the preventable causes of chronic disease, particularly among women. He is also pursues strategies to speed translation of research findings to prevention tactics that work. His past research has focused on the health effects of smoking, weight and weight gain, physical activity, diet, and the adverse effects of medications such as postmenopausal hormone therapy, documenting that current use increases risk of breast cancer. He has received numerous national awards for this research and was elected to the Institute of Medicine in 2006.

Dr Colditz is the principal investigator for TREC@WUSTL, an NCI-funded transdisciplinary research centre studying the associations between obesity and cancer causes, prevention, and survival. He is also the principal investigator of the Siteman Cancer Centre's Program for the Elimination of Cancer Disparities (PECaD), a group that uses community-based partnerships to reduce disparities in cancer prevention, screening, treatment and survivorship in the region.

Dr Colditz’s research includes developing statistical models to more accurately classify levels of risk for several cancers, and the potential for adolescent lifestyle to advance prevention of breast cancer. In 2014, he won the American Society of Clinical Oncology-American Cancer Society Award for Contributions to Cancer Prevention and Management.

This seminar is proudly supported by the Cancer Research Domain and the Public Health, Epidemiology and Health Services Research Domain of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences.

Monday 24 November 2014
12.30 - 1.30 pm, Peter Doherty Institute Auditorium
Ground Level, 792 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne

ALL WELCOME
RSVP not required