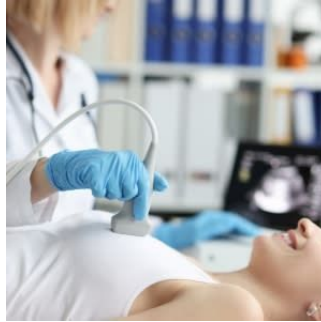


New Findings Will Help Personalise Approaches to Breast Cancer Screening



A recent study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* revealed that women with cancer in one breast may be at a higher risk of developing cancer in the opposite breast. This is subject to them being carriers of specific genetic changes that predispose them to develop breast cancer.

Using data from 15,104 women researchers found that patients carrying a germline BRCA1, BRCA2 or CHEK2 mutation have a twofold increased risk of being diagnosed with cancer in both breasts, known as contralateral breast cancer. Patients carrying germline ATM mutations have a lower risk of developing cancer in both breasts.

Fergus Couch, Ph.D., breast cancer researcher and Anna M. Scheller, Professor of medical research and the principal investigator of the CARRIERS Study, said, "It is also one of the largest studies to provide estimates of contralateral breast cancer risk by age at diagnosis, menopausal status and race/ethnicity in germline mutation carriers".

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The findings expose important information that will help in a personalised assessment of contralateral breast cancer risk in patients who are germline mutation carriers. By providing individualised risk estimates practitioners are able to decide on the appropriate screening and steps to take to reduce the risk for contralateral breast cancer.

For example, the study revealed that premenopausal women carrying germline mutations have a higher risk of contralateral breast cancer compared with women who are post-menopausal at breast cancer diagnosis.

This type of evidence will actually guide decision-making processes, generating discussions between patients and physicians to decide on the most suitable treatment option based on the patient's risk.

Dr. Couch summarised, "Many women will undergo bilateral mastectomy to reduce the possibility of a second breast cancer. Now we have data to work from when making the decision to remove the second breast, pursue aggressive surveillance or take preventive medication".

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