

Breast cancer study says it's different for younger women

March 17 2011, By Christina Voss



The stress, anxiety and psychosocial burdens of young women with breast cancer differ from those of older women. Young women are starting careers, relationships and families, and while their peer group is healthy, they have frequent medical appointments and sometimes debilitating cancer treatments.

SMU health psychologist Georita Frierson recently launched a study that examines the psychological and social challenges faced by women fighting Triple Negative Breast Cancer. This aggressive, non-hormonal form of breast cancer primarily strikes younger women, often African American or Hispanic, or women who test positive for a mutation of the human gene that suppresses tumors, BRCA1.

“We don’t know anything about this population psychologically,” said Frierson, an expert in behavioral health psychology and an assistant professor in the SMU Dedman College Department of Psychology. “But based on this study, we could tailor a psychological intervention to help other women like those in my pilot study. They will be pioneers, and may help others diagnosed with Triple Negative in the future.”

SMU is collaborating on the Triple Negative study with the University of Texas Southwestern Simmons Cancer Center, a National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center. The two-year study will survey up to 60 women recently diagnosed with an aggressive form of [breast cancer](#).

Health providers who have agreed to refer patients with medical approval by their physicians include U.T. Southwestern and Parkland Hospital in Dallas and Moncrief [Cancer](#) Institute in Fort Worth. As a partner in the study, The Cooper Institute in Dallas will provide participants with fitness testing. The survey also is online, so [women](#) outside the Dallas-Fort Worth area can participate in the study by answering a one-time questionnaire. The survey, which takes 45 minutes to an hour to complete, asks questions about physical activity, diet, nutrition, compliance with doctor appointments, stress levels, body image, quality of life, relationships, friendships, fertility, depression, anxiety, sleep and fatigue.

Provided by Southern Methodist University

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