

Breast cancer patients lack adequate fertility preservation advice

November 7 2011

(Medical Xpress) -- Women may not receive adequate information on fertility preservation before breast cancer treatment, according to research presented at the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference in Liverpool today.

Researchers at The Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust surveyed more than 300 NHS [breast cancer](#) surgeons, [nurses](#) and cancer doctors to ask which factors influenced whether they discussed [fertility preservation](#) with their [patients](#). This is the first survey of fertility preservation practices among breast cancer specialists in the UK.

Fewer than 40 per cent of those surveyed reported that the personal circumstances of a patient, such as whether they had children or a partner, influenced whether they discussed fertility preservation.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in women of reproductive age. There are around 4,900 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in UK women aged under 45 each year.

Patients may not have completed their families at the time of their breast cancer diagnosis. There are concerns that taking action to preserve fertility might delay or influence the effectiveness of [cancer treatment](#) and fertility after cancer treatment is an important issue for these women.

Previous research showed that only half of women under 40 diagnosed

with breast cancer felt they had adequately discussed fertility preservation options before treatment.

Report author, Dr Judy King, cancer specialist at the Royal Free Hospital, said: “This important survey reveals wide variation in the knowledge, attitudes and practices of healthcare professionals managing young women with breast cancer.

“This may mean there is a lack of standard information being given to patients, and that referral to a fertility specialist is not always being offered.

“Each breast cancer multidisciplinary team should have a Fertility Lead responsible for identifying patients who are suitable for referral to a fertility specialist. There should be a clear, prompt referral pathway for such patients, to allow time for fertility preservation without the need to delay the start of chemotherapy.”

Dr Jane Cope, director of the NCRI, said: “Fertility preservation is an important topic for younger women treated for breast cancer and might influence a patient’s decision on treatment. This first survey of the referral practices of healthcare professionals in the UK highlights that there is a lack of clear and consistent advice being given to patients and this needs to be addressed urgently.”

More information: View the conference abstract here - [www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference ... /abstracts/A123.html](http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference.../abstracts/A123.html)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

Citation: Breast cancer patients lack adequate fertility preservation advice (2011, November 7)

retrieved 1 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-11-breast-cancer-patients-lack-adequate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.