Nearly half of breast cancer patients at risk of having BRCA mutations not sent for genetic testing

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Only 53 percent of newly diagnosed breast cancer patients who were at high risk of carrying a BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 mutation – based on age, diagnosis, and family history of breast or ovarian cancer – reported that their doctors urged them to be tested for the genes, according to a research team from the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

The findings, which will be presented during the American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting 2013 (Presentation #1358), were drawn from surveys completed by 2,258 women between 18 and 64 who were diagnosed with breast cancer in Pennsylvanian in 2007. While physician recommendations for genetic testing appeared to be targeted at the proper group of patients – just 9 percent of women at low risk of having one of the mutated genes were advised to undergo testing – the finding that such a large portion of high-risk women did not receive a testing recommendation underscores the need to improve provider education about the utility and availability of testing.

Among women at high risk of mutation, the analysis found that those who were older, had lower income, and were employed were less likely to have received a recommendation for testing.

More information: The study will be presented by Anne Marie McCarthy, PhD, in the Behavioral and Social Science in Cancer

Prevention Poster Research Poster Session, Hall A-C, Poster Section 11, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, 801 Mt Vernon Pl NW, Washington, DC 20001, on Monday, April 8, 2013.

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