

## Filipino newcomers to Canada diagnosed with breast cancer at a younger age

February 24 2015

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Filipinos who move to Canada are diagnosed with breast cancer at a younger age than women from other parts of East Asia or Caucasians, new research has found.

They are also more likely to be diagnosed with a more aggressive form of cancer and are more likely to undergo a mastectomy, according to a paper published online in the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.

"The Canadian Filipino community is a growing community and this new research raises the question of whether our current Canadian guidelines calling for mammograms starting at age 50 are meeting specific cultural needs of different ethnicities when it is known that it takes years for a [breast cancer](#) to develop," said Dr. Jory Simpson, a surgical oncologist in the CIBC Breast Centre of St. Michael's Hospital.

"As Canada continues to ethnically diversify this new research only highlights and magnifies the need to take on a more personalized approach to preventing and treating breast cancer."

Dr. Simpson said it's known that women of different ethnic origins have different risks of developing breast cancer. When a women emigrates from an area of low incidence of breast cancer to an area of high incidence, her risk increases, possibly due to new environmental influences such as diet interacting with preexisting genetics.

Dr. Simpson said he believes his study - albeit a small sample at one

hospital - is the first to look at the incidence of breast cancer in Filipino immigrants to Canada. According to Statistics Canada, Filipinos are the third largest non-European ethnic group in the country. Of the 328,000 people of Filipino origin who live in Canada, many are young women.

Of the 782 patients he studied at St. Michael's, which has a sizeable Filipino patient population, Filipino newcomers to Canada were diagnosed with breast cancer at a younger age (53) compared to other East Asians (55) and Caucasians (58).

They were also found to be diagnosed with a form of more aggressive cancer and have a higher likelihood of undergoing a mastectomy. Thirty-seven per cent had a Grade 3 tumour on a scale of 1-3, compared to less than 30 per cent for other Asians and Caucasians. In addition, 22.6 per cent tested positive for the protein HER2, or human epidermal growth factor receptor 2, which promotes the growth of cancer cells. Dr. Simpson said that was "disproportionately high" compared to East Asians (14.4 per cent) and Caucasians (15.1 per cent).

Filipino women with tumours the same size as their East Asian and Caucasian counterparts underwent more mastectomies in this study, 35 per cent, compared with 22.5 per cent for Caucasian woman and 28.3 per cent for East Asian [women](#).

Provided by St. Michael's Hospital

Citation: Filipino newcomers to Canada diagnosed with breast cancer at a younger age (2015, February 24) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-02-filipino-newcomers-canada-breast-cancer.html>

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