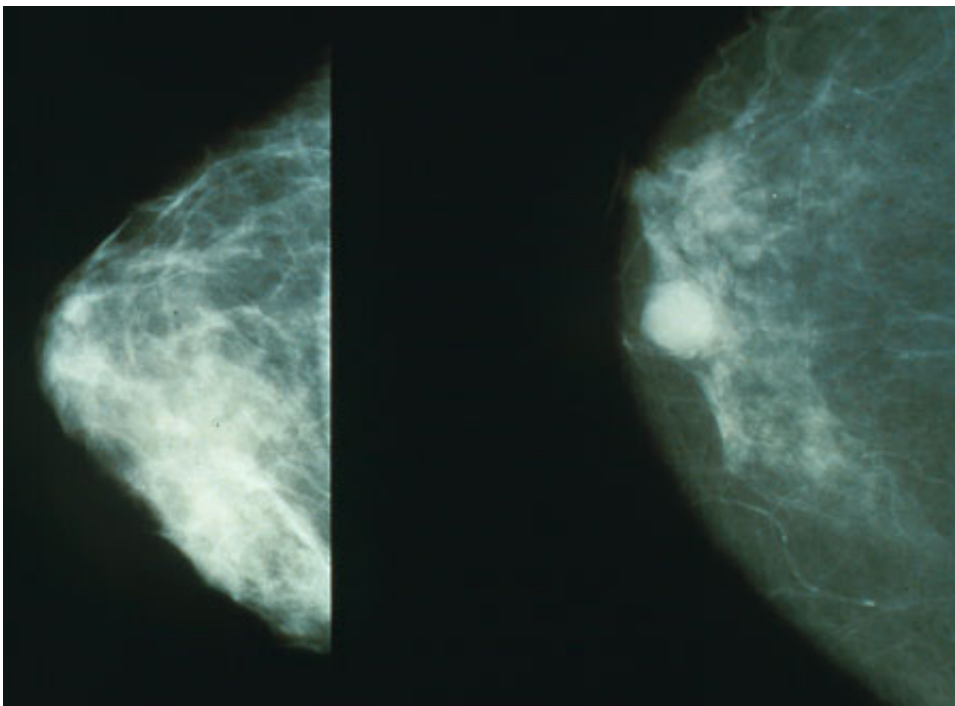


Family history of breast cancer doesn't mean a poor prognosis for women who develop the disease

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Mammograms showing a normal breast (left) and a breast with cancer (right).
Credit: Public Domain

A new large study finds that women who are diagnosed with breast cancer and have a family history of the disease face no worse of a prognosis after treatment than other women with breast cancer. The study, which was published recently in the *BJS (British Journal of*

Surgery), offers a positive message for women who may worry about their future in light of a family history of breast cancer.

About one- quarter of breast cancer cases in developed countries are thought to be related to hereditary factors. It can be scary for a woman to know that she has a family history of the disease, but after diagnosis, what's her prognosis compared with [patients](#) without a family history?

To answer this question, Mr. Ramsey Cutress, an Associate Professor in [breast surgery](#) at the University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton Foundation Trust, and his colleagues conducted an analysis of the Prospective Outcomes in Sporadic versus Hereditary breast cancer (POSH) study, which included 2850 women under age 41 years who were diagnosed with breast cancer and treated in the UK. The study, led by principal investigator Professor Diana Eccles, recorded patients' personal characteristics, tumour characteristics, treatment, and family history of breast/ovarian cancer over a 15-year period.

The investigators found that there were no significant differences in cancer recurrence rates after treatment for [women](#) with a history of breast cancer versus those without.

"Successful treatment for breast cancer is just as likely in young patients with a family history of breast cancer, as in those without a family history," said Mr. Cutress. "Patients with a family history of breast cancer can therefore be reassured that their [family history](#) alone does not mean that their outcome will be worse."

The researchers now plan to investigate whether certain breast cancer gene variants have any impact on the effectiveness of different anticancer treatments. "There is some evidence in laboratory experiments and observations in humans that BRCA1 gene carriers in particular may be more sensitive to certain types of chemotherapy," said

Professor Eccles. "If the outlook is more optimistic than might be expected for these patients, this will help in planning future preventive surgical options at the time of [breast cancer](#) treatment."

More information: "Family history and outcome of young patients with breast cancer in the UK (POSH study)." B. K. Eccles, E. R. Copson, R. I. Cutress, T. Maishman, D. G. Altman, P. Simmonds, S. M. Gerty, L. Durcan, L. Stanton, D. M. Eccles, on behalf of the POSH study steering group. *BJS (British Journal of Surgery)*; Published Online: May 20, 2015. [DOI: 10.1002/bjs.9816](https://doi.org/10.1002/bjs.9816)

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