# Young age associated with worse prognosis in specific breast cancer subtype

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Researcher in lab. Credit: Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center

Researchers at Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center are rapidly advancing the understanding of biological factors, including hormones, as predictors of longer disease-free survival for certain subtypes of breast cancer. The implications for treatment—especially among younger women—can be profound, but uncertainties remain and decision-making by patients and their physicians can be complicated.

Christopher Umbricht, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of oncology with the Kimmel Cancer Center, is the author of a new study of data from breast cancer patients who underwent surgery at The Johns Hopkins Hospital that showed age was a strong predictor of disease-free survival for hormone receptor-positive luminal A breast cancer, the most common type of breast cancer.

He is available for interviews to put the latest research into context and inform women about their treatment options in the light of new findings.

The data showed a significantly lower five-year, disease-free survival for women under age 40. The study was published online by *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*.

Unbricht said the higher levels of circulating estrogen in younger patients could impact the effectiveness of treatments designed to reduce estrogen effects and decrease the chance of breast cancer reoccurrence after surgery.

"If our findings can be independently confirmed with further research, then we can try to find better ways to treat and prevent recurrence of this type of breast cancer in young patients. Meanwhile, there are decisions to be made, and the more information we can provide to women and their clinicians, the better."

Vered Stearns, M.D., co-leader of the Breast and Ovarian Cancer Program at the Kimmel Cancer Center, said young women with breast cancer face different issues than their older counterparts, including challenges to fertility and healthy long-term survivorship.

**More information:** Zhiyang Liu et al. Young age at diagnosis is associated with worse prognosis in the Luminal A breast cancer subtype: a retrospective institutional cohort study, *Breast Cancer Research and*

*Treatment* (2018). DOI: 10.1007/s10549-018-4950-4