

Breast cancer vaccine study begins with first patient

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Credit: Miguel Á. Padriñán from Pexels

An innovative study of a breast cancer vaccine is officially underway, as University of Pittsburgh Medical Center announced on June 20 that the first participant had received her full course of the vaccine.

"Today, more than 30 years of research has brought us to the first of its kind clinical trial [vaccine](#) that could significantly change a [breast cancer diagnosis](#)," said Elizabeth Wild, president of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, at a press conference at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital.

The study is hoping to recruit 50 women like Maria Kitay, 67, who was diagnosed this winter with "stage 0" breast cancer, or [ductal carcinoma in situ](#). Kitay, of the North Hills, received three shots of the vaccine within 10 weeks, with her third shot administered June 20 morning prior to the press conference. She will proceed in two weeks with surgery and other standard treatments.

Researchers will assess whether Kitay—and future participants—develops an [immune response](#) from the vaccine that could help the body fight off future cancer.

"This is one of the few [trials](#) that is actually targeting and developing a vaccine for people who are in stages where they have pre-invasive cancer," said Emilia Diego, breast surgical oncologist at Magee-Womens. "Hopefully, the goal is down the line to be a vaccine for people who don't even have cancer."

"We look forward to many more women signing up for this trial because this is a very innovative way to approach a breast cancer diagnosis, especially a pre-cancer diagnosis, where we can prevent it with the vaccine and eventually intercept it developing into cancer," said lead researcher and Pitt distinguished professor of immunology and surgery Olivera Finn.

"The long term goal is to prevent cancer and women who are participating in this trial are really going to help us combat it once and for all."

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