

Better prognosis for breast cancer in Germany

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How successful is the interdisciplinary treatment of breast cancer? Since 2003, the Breast Center at Heidelberg University Hospital has systematically tracked the course of breast cancer in more than 3,000 patients and, as the first center in Germany, has published these significant prospective results: Eighty-six percent of the patients survived the first five years after onset of treatment, with 80 % of them remaining disease-free during this period. The evaluation was published online in February 2012 in the journal *The Breast*.

"The prognosis for breast cancer has further improved thanks to new treatment options and consistent interdisciplinary treatment," said Prof. Christof Sohn, Managing Director of the Heidelberg University Women's Hospital and Director of the Breast Center. This is proven by the results of treatment in Heidelberg. An evaluation of the German cancer registry for the period from 2000 to 2004 conducted by Robert Koch Institute in 2010 yielded a probability of 79.6 % for disease-free survival in the first five years after treatment. A current study by the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) that analyzed the data of 11 German cancer registries from the period from 2002 to 2006 yielded a probability of approx. 84 %. In the United States, according to the [National Cancer Institute](#), this probability was 89 % for the period from 1999 to 2006.

Eighty-six percent of the patients were still alive five years after treatment

The interdisciplinary team in Heidelberg headed by Prof. Andreas Schneeweiss, head of the section of Gynecological Oncology at the National Center for Tumor Diseases and the Heidelberg University Hospital Women's Hospital and by Dr. Jörg Heil, head physician and coordinator of the Heidelberg University Hospital Breast Center, evaluated the data of all 3,338 patients newly diagnosed with malignant breast cancer treated at Heidelberg University Hospital's Breast Center from 2003 to

2010. Five years after initial treatment, 80 % were disease-free, i.e., the cancer had not recurred. In 15 % of the patients, a tumor had recurred in the breast and in 19 %, metastases had occurred, with some patients experiencing both. Eighty-six percent of the patients survived the first five years after initial diagnosis. Taking the deaths into account that were not attributed to the breast cancer, the evaluation showed that only 10 % of the patients died from breast cancer during the first five years after diagnosis.

Interdisciplinary tumor board provides recommendations for treatment

"Our results serve as a basis for further improving preventative care and treatment of breast cancer patients," said Prof. Schneeweiss. "In this area, with the structures created at the National Center for Tumor Diseases in Heidelberg, we are setting the standards for other centers in Germany." Since 2003, Prof. Schneeweiss has managed the meticulous documentation of all breast cancer cases, which now constitutes the data base for this and other such analyses and will continue to do so in the future. Prof. Schneeweiss is also the head of the interdisciplinary tumor board and is therefore responsible for drawing up the individual interdisciplinary treatment recommendations.

In 2003, the Breast Center at Heidelberg University Women's Hospital was one of the first centers in Germany to be certified by the German Cancer Society and the German Society for Senology. Today, there are more than 200 certified breast centers in Germany. In 2006, the Breast Center was accredited by the European Society of [Breast Cancer Specialists \(EUSOMA\)](#). For patients, this means that an experienced team of physicians and modern treatment options ensure high-quality diagnostics and treatment through multidisciplinary cooperation. In 2011, Heidelberg University Hospital's Breast Center treated over 600 newly diagnosed patients, making it one of Germany's

largest breast centers.

More information: *The Breast* (2012),
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