

Date:	23 rd May 2013
To:	General Practitioners
From:	Dr. Susan O'Reilly
Re:	Advice to General Practitioners re Familial Breast Cancer

ADVICE TO GENERAL PRACTITIONERS RE FAMILIAL BREAST CANCER:

Background:

About 5% of breast cancers are due to an inherited susceptibility. Features of familial breast cancer include: several family members from the same side of the family affected; cancers at a younger age than usual; association with ovarian cancer; two primary cancers in the same person; and male breast cancer. More than 98% of women in Ireland will NOT have a genetic mutation that predisposes them to breast cancer.

Who is eligible for testing?

Testing for mutations in genes, such as BRCA 1 or BRCA 2, begins with a Patient who has been diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer. Her treating consultant will offer a referral for testing when appropriate, according to guidance from the National Centre for Medical Genetics. Cancer genetics services are currently located in the National Centre for Medical Genetics (in Crumlin, or one of its outreach clinics), St James's Hospital and the Mater Hospital. It is important that a woman is counselled as to the implications of a genetic test before she is tested (including options for surveillance or surgery if positive).

Only if the test result is positive, her close relatives will be offered testing for the specific gene fault identified. Again, they will be counselled by a cancer genetics expert in advance of having the test done.

Who does not need testing?

Note that accurate predictive breast cancer genetic testing on a healthy woman with a family history of breast cancer is not clinically recommended, unless a specific gene alteration has been identified in an affected family member.

The role of the Symptomatic Breast Clinics in the Designated Cancer Centres:

Any well woman for whom there is a concern of increased risk of breast cancer based on her family history can be referred to the Symptomatic Breast Clinic in one of the Designated Cancer Centres where a decision will be made on her risk and her need for surveillance.

Useful Reference:

The UK National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence 'Familial breast cancer: quick reference guide' provides guidance on the classification of a woman's risk according to her family history (Available at: <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG41/QuickRefGuide/pdf/English>).

Again, the features which raise suspicion are: several family members from the same side of the family affected; cancers at a younger age than usual; association with ovarian cancer; two primary cancers in the same person; and male breast cancer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Susan O'Reilly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Dr. Susan O'Reilly MB, BCh, BAO, FRCPC, FRCPI
National Director
National Cancer Control Programme