

J43 Breast Cancer Risk

October 2009

Intro: Every year about 250-thousand women in the United States are diagnosed with breast cancer. Most of these women were not known to be at high risk. That's why researchers at Mayo Clinic are looking for better ways to identify who's at increased risk in order to enhance early detection and, perhaps some day, help these women prevent the disease. They're finding clues in breast tissue.

Video

Total running time 2:02

CG :00 to :09

Lynn Hartmann, M.D.

Mayo Clinic

Audio

“OUR MAIN GOAL IS TO TRY TO DO A BETTER JOB OF IDENTIFYING WHICH WOMEN ARE AT SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED RISK FOR DEVELOPING BREAST CANCER.”

TO DO THAT, DR. LYNN HARTMANN AND HER COLLEAGUES AT MAYO CLINIC ARE LOOKING INSIDE THE BREAST AT THE TINY LOBULES -- THE SITE WHERE BREAST CANCER STARTS.

“THE LOBULE IS THE FUNCTIONAL UNIT OF THE BREAST. WHEN A WOMAN IS PREGNANT OR

CG :39 to :53
Standup
Vivien Williams
Reporting

REACHES THE END OF HER PREGNANCY THEY EXPAND AND BECOME LITTLE MILK-PRODUCING FACTORIES. AFTER A WOMAN IS FINISHED WITH CHILDBEARING, AS SHE APPROACHES MENOPAUSE, THE LOBULES ARE SUPPOSED TO GO AWAY.”

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN IS A PROCESS CALLED INVOLUTION. AND RESEARCH SHOWS THAT IF THE LOBULES IN A WOMAN’S BREAST DO NOT REGRESS BY AGE 55, SHE HAS THREE TIMES THE RISK OF DEVELOPING BREAST CANCER THAN WOMEN WHO’S LOBULES DO. DR. HARTMANN’S RESEARCH, PUBLISHED IN THE “JOURNAL OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY”, LOOKS DEEPER INTO THAT TISSUE TO TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHERE A WOMAN IS IN THE INVOLUTION PROCESS. THE IDEA

IS TO DETERMINE MORE
PRECISELY HER INDIVIDUAL RISK.
IT'S A TWO-FOLD APPROACH.
"ONE IS TO ACTUALLY COUNT THE
SMALL CELL STRUCTURES CALLED
THE ACINI. THOSE ARE THE
GLANDS WHERE MILK
PRODUCTION OCCURS."
SECOND IS TO MEASURE THE
AREA OF THE LOBULES. HERE'S
WHAT HER RESEARCH FOUND.
"WOMEN WHO WERE MORE LIKELY
TO DEVELOP BREAST CANCER
HAD LARGER LOBULES WITH MORE
ACINI. "
IN OTHER WORDS THEY HAD LESS
REDUCTION OF LOBULES IN THEIR
BREAST AS THEY AGED. THE GOAL
FOR DR. HARTMANN AND HER
TEAM IS IS THAT THIS RESEARCH
WILL BECOME PART OF A NEW
RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL TO BE
USED WITH EXISTING RISK

FEATURES SUCH AS AGE AND
FAMILY HISTORY. AND IF
DOCTORS KNOW WHO IS AT
INCREASED RISK, THEY CAN HELP
WOMEN TAKE STEPS TO BETTER
CONTROL THAT RISK. FOR
MEDICAL EDGE, I'M VIVIEN
WILLIAMS.

Anchor tag:

Dr. Hartmann says the next step in this ongoing research may be to try to figure out why some women have normal regression of lobules and others don't. And that information may help them discover ways to help promote the involution process. For more information about breast cancer risk, visit our Website at...**[STATIONS: Per the licensing agreement, please provide a link from your station's website to <http://www.mayoclinic.org> or voice tag "mayoclinic.org" for more information.]**