

Genetic counseling essential step in assessing breast cancer risk

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Although counseling is widely recommended before gene testing, most U.S. women who were sent by doctors to be tested for BRCA1 and BRCA2, two genes that increase the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, never met with a counselor beforehand.

The main reason, researchers found, is that the women's doctors didn't recommend seeing a genetic counselor.

"There are very clear and consistent guidelines that people should receive genetic counseling before genetic testing for cancer susceptibility," said Dr. Rebecca Sutphen, the study's senior author from the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine in Tampa.

Although women who received counseling before gene testing were more knowledgeable about the test and the meaning of its results, as well as more satisfied overall, some experts say traditional genetic counseling may no longer be the only or best option – especially as gene tests become cheaper and more accessible.

Genetic counselors typically explain the test's appropriateness, medical implications, psychological risks and the possibility the results won't be informative. They may also discuss the risk of passing on the gene mutation to children.

Women most commonly said they didn't see a genetic counselor because their doctors didn't recommend the service.

Those who did receive counseling were more knowledgeable about BRCA and reported better understanding and satisfaction, compared to women who didn't receive counseling.

Read full, original post: [Genetic counseling is rare among BRCA-tested women](#)