

Viewpoint: Widespread DNA testing for breast cancer risk is ‘an irresponsible idea’

While predictive genetic testing is useful and even crucial for many populations, new medical advances are routinely overhyped in the media and misunderstood by consumers and providers alike.

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Here’s a case in point: Recently, the Journal of Clinical Oncology published a study evaluating whether patients with breast cancer in the United States are being appropriately recommended for a full panel of DNA testing for hereditary breast cancer.

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Of the 959 individuals tested, 83 harbored a pathogenic or likely pathogenic variant. The researchers posit that in the real world, based on their response to the multi-part question, 38 of these 83 women would never have been tested—leading to potential missed diagnoses. The authors conclude by recommending that all previously or currently diagnosed breast cancer patients undergo expanded panel testing.

The issue with this line of reasoning is that the clinical utility of many of these found variants for predicting recurrent cancer or breast cancer risk in family members is actually unclear.

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Asserting that every woman should be tested simply because we have the technology is an irresponsible idea. Genetic tests are not unequivocal, and there are well-known unintended consequences to their widespread, unmanaged use.

Read full, original post: [DNA Testing for Breast Cancer Risk: What the Current Medical Evidence Tells Us](#)