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Genetic Testing for Breast Cancer – Recommendations

At least 80% of patients diagnosed with breast cancer have no known family history of breast cancer. Some patients are adopted and don't know their family history while others have very small families or are estranged from their families. The remaining 20% of patients have some known family history of breast cancer or other related cancers and may have a genetic mutation increasing the likelihood of developing cancer. Even when there is no known family history of breast cancer about 5-7% of patients newly diagnosed with breast cancer are found to have a genetic mutation.

In recent years, the ability to test for dozens of genetic mutations on a single sample has improved while the cost has decreased. The "next generation" testing methods for genetic mutation allows multiple genes to be tested simultaneously in a simplified manner. Using this newer technique, a panel of 25-30 genes can be tested with the same effort and less cost than a previous test for a single gene.

In view of the high value of knowing whether a genetic mutation is present and the low cost of the test, we have changed our approach to genetic testing for patients who are newly diagnosed with breast cancer. We suggest that ALL patients consider the genetic panel testing from a low cost lab. This can be done through our office, or you can do this yourself online direct with the company. The significance of knowing whether you have a genetic mutation is so important and the incidence is high enough that we feel this approach is reasonable.

With the new genetic testing technology, multiple companies have come to the market allowing competition to lower the prices. The University of Washington has used a company for the last few years because of their high quality and low cost. The company, Color.com, charges the public \$199 for a full panel of 30 genes tested which includes all the breast cancer genes for which we usually test. At times they have a discounted price (\$99) for patients who have insurance and are tested through a doctor's office. (In the past these tests cost over \$3,500.)

Please be aware that our own policy does not change your own personal insurance rules about paying for genetic testing. YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY MAY NOT PAY FOR THE TEST and you would be sent the bill. But because the cost is close to affordable for many patients, we believe our new approach is reasonable in view of the value received for you and your family with the test results.

If you wish to have the test, please ask us for a brochure or testing kit. If you have questions about this test, please let us know.

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