

Younger breast cancer patients have greater chance of recurrence

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Breast cancer patients 35 years old and younger have higher rates of their cancer returning after treatment than older women patients with the same stage of cancer, and their risk of recurrence is greatly impacted by the type of treatment they received, according to a March 1 study in the *International Journal of Radiation Oncology*Biography*Physics*, the official journal of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO).

Previous studies have shown that younger breast cancer patients consistently have poorer outcomes than patients who develop the disease later in life, which can translate into lower rates of overall survival. While the reason for this is not known, it is suggested that breast cancer in younger patients is more biologically aggressive.

Researchers from the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston sought to determine which form of breast cancer treatment - breast-conserving therapy, mastectomy alone or mastectomy with adjuvant radiation - better benefits younger women with either Stage I or Stage II breast cancer.

A total of 652 young women with breast cancer from 1973 to 2006 were studied, with 197 of the patients having received breast-conserving therapy, 237 having received a mastectomy and 234 having received mastectomy with adjuvant radiation. The study authors confirmed that younger breast cancer patients do have relatively high locoregional recurrence rates, but that patients with Stage II disease achieved the best locoregional control rates with mastectomy plus adjuvant radiation therapy. Patients with Stage I disease had similar outcomes with breast-conserving therapy and mastectomy, but adding chemotherapy to either treatment was beneficial.

"Locoregional recurrence after optimal breast cancer treatment in young women remains a

significant problem," Beth Beadle, M.D., Ph.D., a resident at M. D. Anderson and lead author of the study, said. "Our study hopefully will help radiation oncologists plan therapies for younger breast cancer patients, who have inferior outcomes compared to older patients, and generate new interest in prospective studies to evaluate the best treatment strategies for these young women."

Source: American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology

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