Understanding Early Breast Cancer and the Risk of Recurrence

About Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women worldwide, surpassing lung cancer as the most commonly diagnosed cancer with >2.3 million new cases in 2020.1

In the United States:
- Breast cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer in 2020.1
- >1% of breast cancers occur in men.2
- >4% higher mortality rate among Black women compared with white women.2

Not all types of breast cancer are the same

How breast cancer is treated depends upon many different factors, including:
- Molecular subtype (based on gene expression in cancer tissue)
- The stage of duct and gland (I, II, III, IV, A, B, C, and D)
- Increased levels of certain proteins (e.g., estrogen or progesterone hormone receptor [EHR, PGR] human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 [HER2] or mutations
- Other clinical factors (e.g., physical exams, imaging and/or pathological [e.g., bound during biopsy]) factors

What to Know about the Risk of HR+ HER2- Breast Cancer Recurrence:

The progressor for HR+, HER2- early breast cancer is generally positive—a historically approximately 20% of patients diagnosed will experience recurrence.2

Risk of recurrence is greatest within the initial years after diagnosis.2

Goals of Treatment

The ultimate goal of breast cancer treatment is to prevent the cancer from spreading or coming back and also to help patients live longer. Endocrine therapy, also known as hormonal therapy, is appropriate for many patients and some may need other treatment options to help prevent cancer from returning.3

Risk of recurrence is the likelihood that the cancer will come back. Scientists are learning why some cancers are more likely to regrow than others.4

What Are Recurrence Risk Factors?

Identifying breast cancer that has a greater risk of coming back involves looking at a variety of factors that extend beyond the tumor size and grade to include estrogen receptor (ER), progesterone receptor (PR), and HER2 status and can include:

- Number of positive lymph nodes
- Tumor size and growth within the breast
- Tumor grade
- Markers of cancer cell proliferation
- Multigene assays

Researchers are investigating ways to better understand the risk of breast cancer coming back and what can be done to prevent recurrence. Identifying these factors can help patients and healthcare providers make informed decisions about suitable treatment options.

References