

Fear Often Drives Prophylactic Mastectomy

Charles Bankhead

Most breast cancer patients who undergo contralateral prophylactic mastectomy based the decision on fear, not science, according to a survey of more than 2,000 patients.

Approximately 80% of women who underwent the preventive surgery did not have clinical indications that would classify them as high risk for recurrence. In the subgroup of patients without clinical indications, concern about cancer recurrence figured more prominently in the decision to have a prophylactic contralateral mastectomy, as compared with patients who did have clinical indications.

Women who underwent mastectomy for the primary cancer were almost three times as likely to have the prophylactic procedure compared with the overall group of patients, according to Sarah Hawley, MD, of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

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