Breast Cancer Survivor Heart Risk

Results showed that women who had received anthracyclines and/or Herceptin had a high risk for heart failure.

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Many breast cancer survivors face an increased risk for treatment-induced heart disease, finds a study in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. Researchers at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle compared data from electronic medical records for 13,642 women with breast cancer and 68,202 women without breast cancer. The patients were followed for an average of 14 years.

Researchers focused on chemotherapy agents known as anthracyclines (such as Adriamycin) and the monoclonal antibody trastuzumab (Herceptin); radiation, especially on the left side; and endocrine therapies, such as aromatase inhibitors and tamoxifen. Results showed that women who had received anthracyclines and/or Herceptin had a high risk for heart failure. (The highest risk was found in women receiving both drugs.)

Heart failure risk was also high in women who received radiation therapy plus aromatase inhibitor therapy.

“We hope to raise awareness that women who are breast cancer survivors must receive comprehensive, ongoing follow-up care and monitoring for cardiovascular risk,” Heather Greenlee, ND, PhD, MPH, a public health researcher at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and lead author of the article, told the Fred Hutch News Service.

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