ID’ing Barriers to Genetic Testing Among Latina Breast Cancer Survivors

A new study aims to explore awareness of genetic testing for cancer predisposition among Latinas.

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UC Davis Health researchers are recruiting Latina breast cancer survivors to explore their awareness and understanding of genetic testing for cancer predisposition, according to a UC Davis Health news release.

Testing for genetic mutations or variants that drive cancer can save lives. A recent study found that up to 5% of Americans carry genetic mutations associated with cancer risk. For example, people with harmful BRCA mutations are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer.

“Genetic testing, which analyzes a person’s DNA, is a powerful and reliable tool for identifying mutations or variants that may increase the risk of certain diseases, including cancer,” said principal researcher and UC Davis associate vice chancellor for academic diversity Luis Carvajal-Carmona, PhD, in the release. “For example, if a mother is diagnosed with breast cancer and found to carry a mutation linked to the disease, her family members can also undergo genetic testing to determine whether they share the same risk.”

Titled Entendiéndonos (“understanding each other” in Spanish), the study aims to recruit at least 300 Latina breast cancer survivors ages 20 to 79 to identify pathways and barriers to genetic counseling and testing.

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women, after skin cancer. Nearly 316,950 women are diagnosed with invasive cancer annually, according to the American Cancer Society.

Although Latinas overall have lower breast cancer rates compared with non-Hispanic white women, they are often diagnosed at later stages. What’s more, Latinas and their family members

are less likely to pursue genetic testing for breast cancer compared with non-Hispanic white women.

Breast cancer is easier to treat than many other cancers, and early detection and treatment improve outcomes. But if cancer is diagnosed after it has spread elsewhere in the body, it is harder to treat, and the likelihood of survival is lower.

The new study aims to understand why people who qualify for genetic testing rarely undergo it. Researchers suppose that genetic testing was perhaps never offered to some, or individuals were unaware that insurance usually covers both the test and a consultation with a genetic counselor.

“There could be many reasons why breast cancer survivors do or don’t undergo genetic testing—and we want to get to the bottom of it,” Carvajal-Carmona said.

Researchers hope to identify barriers to testing and develop recommendations to increase awareness and testing rates.

To read more, click #Genetic Testing or #Breast Cancer. There, you’ll see headlines such as “New Guide to Inform Cancer Patients on Genetic Testing,” “Testing for Hereditary Cancers Can Be a Lifesaver” and “How an American Cancer Society Research Grantee Improves Breast Cancer Screening and Care.”
