



TIP SHEET



CANADIAN GENETIC DISEASES NETWORK

November 28, 1994

CANADIAN STUDY LEADS TO GENETIC TEST FOR BREAST AND OVARIAN CANCER

A Canadian research team led by a member of the Canadian Genetic Diseases Network has released the results of a study which now makes it possible for some Canadian women to receive predictive testing for breast and ovarian cancer. The team is led by Dr. Steven Narod, a Professor of Medicine at McGill University and a researcher at the Montreal General Hospital, in collaboration with other Canadian researchers.

The study, conducted with 30 families with multiple cases of breast and ovarian cancer, found that in 43% of the families tested, the cancers are linked to mutations, or abnormalities, in the recently discovered BRCA1 gene. This means generally that healthy women who are under 50 and in families where there are at least two cases of breast cancer and two cases of ovarian cancer are good candidates for genetic testing for the diseases.

The results of the study are to be published November 29, 1994 in the scientific journal *Nature Genetics*.

Said Dr. Narod, "Our testing program will be greatly expanded if we are able to determine that the majority of families with hereditary breast and ovarian cancer are accounted for by a small number of mutations in the gene. This will mean our being able to diagnose many more potential cases before they become clinical."

Dr. Narod headed the Canadian team that collaborated with American scientists and led to the cloning of the BRCA1 gene in September 1994. He is currently conducting research on environmental factors which influence the risk of cancers in BRCA1 carriers, and has also begun working towards identification of BRCA2, the second breast cancer gene.

Dr. Narod's research is supported in part by the Canadian Genetic Diseases Network, a consortium of 38 of Canada's leading geneticists who are linked with nine universities across Canada and 10 core facilities to form an "institute without walls".

Network Scientific Director, Dr. Michael Hayden, commented "This is a remarkable development. Predictive testing for these diseases is now a reality for certain families and may, with additional research, become feasible for a much larger number of women." He added "The Network's collaborations will be crucial to the rapid progress of Dr. Narod's on-going research and the development of new diagnostics and, potentially, therapies for these disorders."

The network carries a mandate under the federal government's Networks of Centres of Excellence Program to perform leading-edge research and to work with industry partners on detection and treatment of genetically-transmitted disease.

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