

Smoking does not lead to more aggressive or advanced breast cancers

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Smoking cigarettes is associated with an increased risk of cancers of the lung, head and neck, esophagus, bladder and many others and also affects response to anti-cancer treatments. But smoking does not result in more advanced stage diagnoses or aggressive breast cancers at the time of diagnosis.

That is the result of an analysis of 35 years of data for more than 6,000 patients presented today at the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology's 49th Annual Meeting in Los Angeles.

"We hypothesized that tobacco use could result in more advanced stage or more aggressive breast cancer presentation, but that doesn't appear to be the case," said Matthew Abramowitz, M.D., a resident in the radiation oncology department at Fox Chase Cancer Center. "There is no good news about smoking, but since about 10 percent of our patients are smokers, this research provides us with some relief. The question that remains is will smoking affect their survival?"

Abramowitz and his colleagues examined the medical records of 6,162 breast cancer patients at the time of initial diagnosis from 1970 to 2006 at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia. Patient characteristics were prospectively collected by physician interview and questionnaire. Nine percent of the patients were current smokers when they were first seen for consultation.

"There was no statistically significant correlation between smoking and the stage of the disease or the aggressiveness of the tumor," concluded Abramowitz. "The remaining question is does smoking affect how long these women live? In other words, does smoking affect the tumor's behavior, its effect on the treatment to kill the cancer or recovery from treatment?"

Source: Fox Chase Cancer Center

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