

Denise Dunn

From: Deborah Thomas-Pennell
Sent: Friday, October 14, 2005 10:01 AM
To: Denise Dunn; Dr. Robert Williams
Subject: FW: 101451



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Transcript of Mark Quinn's piece this am.

Deborah

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From: Media [mailto:media@marqueeinc.com]
Sent: Friday, October 14, 2005 9:34 AM
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Electronic Media Transcripts

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Client: Eastern Health
 Source: CBC Morning Show 7:44 A.M. 101451
 Date: October 14, 2005
 Ann: Jeff Gilhooly

Announcer: Hundreds of people with breast cancer in this province are wondering if they're getting the best possible treatment. The Eastern Health Authority says it doesn't trust the results of a test it gives breast cancer patients. The findings of the test help determine what treatment a cancer patient receives and it can ultimately affect survival rates. Health officials in this province say they've discovered that some patients were given the wrong results and now they're taking steps to fix the problem. The CBC's Mark Quinn has been looking into this story and he joins me now in the studio. Good morning, Mark.

Mark Quinn: Good morning, Jeff.

Announcer: What do you know about these tests?

Quinn: Well it's called the hormone receptor test and it's a test that looks at the cells of cancer patients, breast cancer patients specifically. And it looks to see if those cells have receptors for either estrogen or progesterone. If a certain percentage of those cells have those receptors then the patient is called hormone receptor positive. If a low percentage of those cells or none of those cells have those

receptors, then a patient is called hormone receptor negative. Now this is important because if a person is positive, they be given the an anti-hormonal, hormonal drug such as Tamoxifen and if they're negative they aren't given this drug.

Announcer: Okay.

Quinn: And research in [inaudible] journals have shown that Tamoxifen can increase a pat, sorry, a cancer patient's survival rate.

Announcer: Can, can increase it.

Quinn: Can increase it, yeah.

Announcer: Okay. So why are the results of this hormone receptor test being questioned here?

Quinn: Well health officials say it all stems back to one patient who questioned the results of her hormone, hormone receptor test. The test she had done here in St. John's said that she was negative. Now that's what the original finding was. But she didn't trust that finding so she went out of the province, she had another test done and that test found that in fact she was positive. So after that, the health authority wondered if there was a problem with their testing. They had more tests done of other people who had tests and they found in fact some of those were also faulty. So they see it as a problem.

Announcer: Tell me what it means to patients if the results of the test are wrong?

Quinn: Well if they're told they're negative when in fact they're positive, it could affect the treatment they receive and ultimately it could affect their survival. People who are positive, like I said, may be given

Tamoxifen and that drug might help them live longer. If you're told you're negative when in fact you're positive, you might be missing opportunity to get a drug that could help you.

Announcer: Yeah, okay. So how have people reacted to this?

Quinn: Well I spoke with officials at the Canadian Cancer Society and they said that one woman that they spoke with has learned that she's falsely identified as negative and she is considering legal action. The official I spoke with said that this woman is struggling to stay alive and it was very difficult for her to learn that she may have been helped by Tamoxifen in fact. The local chapter of the Cancer Society says that they are getting many calls from patients who are upset. And I spoke with Peter Dawe, who's the executive director of the society's chapter here.

Peter Dawe: You're dealing with cancer, there's so many issues that you got to deal with. And the last thing that you want on your mind is, is the test result accurate? And that, that's just, you know, that's, that's just totally unacceptable. So that piece has got to be 100 percent guaranteed that it's working properly.

Announcer: Peter Dawe of the Canadian Cancer Society. Mark, what's being done to fix the problem?

Quinn: The Eastern Health Authority is having all the samples that tested negative back to 1997 re-tested at the Mount Sinai Hospital Laboratory in Toronto. That laboratory is considered the best laboratory in Canada for this kind of test. The health authority here is also having a team of medical experts review how this test is done

here and they're going to look at problems. When I spoke with the vice president of quality diagnostic and medical services at the Health Sciences Centre here, he said, he said they've been doing everything they can trying to find the problem. His name is Dr. Bob Williams, and here's what he said.

Bob Williams: Well we want to make sure that if, when we gear up the new automated system that we have solved the problem. So we want to make, you know, obviously if we've had a problem in the past, we want to make sure that it never recurs again and we'll do our best to do that.

Announcer: Mark, does the health authority know what caused the problem?

Quinn: Right now they haven't ruled out any possibilities. They say it could be faulty equipment. It could be misinterpretation of the results. They're not sure. They're looking at everything. The Health Sciences Centre did change the equipment they used to do this test recently. They replaced a semi-automated system with a more automated system recently. Now Dr. Williams says that this will reduce the possibility of errors but they don't know if they've solved the problem yet.

Announcer: Okay, do we know how many, how many people are affected?

Quinn: Health officials say that about 300 people from across Newfoundland and Labrador are given this test each year. Approximately three quarters of them test positive. So hundreds of samples are being re-tested. And Dr. Williams says they expect that less than 10 percent of those will turn out to false negatives.

Announcer: Well concerns have been raised by patients about how they were notified, right. So what's the health authority saying about those concerns?

Quinn: There's one breast cancer survivor who we spoke with on CBC earlier this week who had heard about this problem in the news. And she said that when she asked her GP about this, her doctor didn't know about it. So she was concerned that the information wasn't getting out there. Dr. Williams says the health authority did go public with this when they first learned about it. Sorry, he said they didn't go public with this when they first learned about it months ago because they didn't want to cause unnecessary concern. They've only been contacting patients who they found had false negative results originally and they've asked them to consult their doctors. They also say that if patients have concerns they can call a patients relations officer at 777-6500. And furthermore the health authority has posted a letter on the provincial Medical Association's website explaining the situation to doctors. Here's what Dr. Williams has said about this.

Williams: There was a discussion about it and individual patients have been informed. The issue is when you don't have all the information and then you alarm people, some, a lot of people unduly, then it was felt that we'd better get more information and, and when we do go public and discuss it publically we have good information.

Quinn: Again that was Dr. Bob Williams at the Health Sciences Centre. Now the one patient I spoke with said that, you know, that isn't quite good enough and they were concerned... Well the way they described

this is they said this was sort of a patronizing approach. And she said the health authority should be doing more to contact people like her who may have questions about these tests.

Announcer: So what happens now?

Quinn: What happens now is the health authority is waiting for results from Mount Sinai Hospital. They're still doing testing there. If someone comes in and needs this test, the test samples are sent there. They'll continue to have these tests there until the Health Sciences Centre here says they're absolutely certain that they're accurate here.

Announcer: Okay and that number again, 777-6500, right? Okay. Thanks, Mark.

Quinn: Thank you.

Announcer: CBC Reporter Mark Quinn.
