

Susan Bonnell

From: Susan Bonnell
Sent: Tuesday, October 04, 2005 2:59 PM
To: Dr. Robert Williams; Denise Dunn
Subject: letter to physicians for NLMA Website

Dear Physician,

The laboratory at the Health Sciences Centre would like to inform you of a situation which may affect you and your patients.

Eastern Health has begun retesting a select group of breast cancer patients – those whose results indicated that they were negative for Estrogen and Progesterone receptors (ER and PR).

In 2004, the immunohistochemistry laboratory at the Health Sciences Centre that does all ER and PR testing for the province introduced a new piece of technology and we discovered some inconsistent results from the old methodology.

This has prompted Eastern Health to re-test all negative ER and PR receptors results since 1997 to ensure that all patients have every treatment opportunity that may be available to them. There is some evidence that taking Tamoxifen up to seven years post cancer may be beneficial to patients.

We are using previously collected tissue samples, so patients are not required to come to hospital or have any additional testing.

Only a small percentage of breast cancer patients may be affected by this retesting. Approximately 75% of all breast cancer patients already tested positive for ER and PR receptors. From the results that we have retested thus far, we are anticipating that less than 10% of all breast cancer patients will convert from a negative to a positive and *may* experience a change or addition to their cancer therapy. Patients with positive ER and PR results or those who previously received hormone therapy for their cancer are not impacted.

You may be contacted by your patients for answers or information about this situation. Although only a small number of people are directly affected by this situation, many more may have concerns or questions and may direct them to you – their trusted physician.

Feel free to tell your patients that the laboratory is continuing to test results and patients are being contacted if there is a change to their result or a potential change to their treatment.

Patients with general questions about this issue may call the Patient Relations Officer at Eastern Health at 777-6500. She will attempt to answer questions or link patients to the appropriate medical resource.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Williams
Vice-President, Medical Services
Eastern Health

October 4, 2005