
New Study Suggests Breast Cancer Patients Over 65 May Not Always Need Radiation Therapy



According to a new study published in The New England Journal of Medicine, some older breast cancer patients who skip radiation therapy after surgery may not be at risk, in terms of it affecting their overall survival.

This is subject to patients receiving five years of endocrine therapy.

The study suggests that radiation which can have side effects including fatigue, breast pain as well as risk of heart and lung complications, may not be necessary for patients to extend their survival rate if they are having endocrine therapy.

Dr. Alice Ho of Duke University School of Medicine and Dr. Jennifer Bellon of Harvard Medical School, said, "The ability to omit radiotherapy is one of many options in a lengthy list that also includes the use of abbreviated radiotherapy regimens and smaller target volumes".

"Pragmatically, radiotherapy can strain time and finances. Therefore, robust data solidifying the option to omit radiotherapy in selected patients are welcome".

The study included data on 1,326 women with breast cancer who were 65 and older; 658 of the women were assigned to receive radiation therapy across their whole breast, and 668 of them received no radiation therapy.

The findings revealed that the incidence of local recurrence up to 10 years for patients who received radiotherapy was low. By contrast, patients who did not receive radiotherapy, the incidence continued to increase.

At 10 years overall survival was nearly identical: 80.8% without radiation therapy and 80.7% with radiation therapy. In the no radiation therapy group, there were sixteen deaths and in the radiation therapy group, there were 15 deaths due to breast cancer.

Overall, this paper adds to the weight of evidence that in women over 70, adding radiation can lower the risk of local recurrence but it does not change the overall survival.

Source: [CNN](#)

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