

Medical Oncologists' Views on the Role of Family Physicians in Multi-gene Expression Profile Testing in Breast Cancer

MA O'Brien¹, JC Carroll¹, R Heisey¹, M Krzyzanowska², S Pruthi³, D Manca⁴, E Eisenhauer⁵, B Miedema⁶, J Sussman⁷ and E Grunfeld¹ for the CanIMPACT Investigators.

Affiliations: 1 Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto; 2 Department of Medicine, University of Toronto; 3 Division of General Internal Medicine, Mayo Clinic; 4 Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta; 5 Department of Oncology, Queen's University; 6 Department of Family Medicine, Dalhousie University; 7 Department of Oncology, McMaster University

Background: In early stage breast cancer, multi-gene expression profile testing may help to predict the risk of recurrent disease. In several Canadian provinces, Oncotype Dx^R testing is funded for eligible patients. However, previous research suggests that patients have difficulty understanding risk information from such tests. Patients may turn to their family physicians for information about testing and treatment options. Yet little is known about the role of family physicians in supporting patients in understanding these test results and assisting patients with treatment decision making.

Research Objectives: This pilot study explored medical oncologists' views on family physicians' role in multi-gene expression profile testing related to breast cancer.

Methods: Study participants were 12 medical oncologists in active clinical practice in Ontario, Canada. Purposive sampling was used to identify a diverse sample of oncologists (sex, years in practice, type and location of practice). Semi-structured personal interviews were conducted. Coding and analysis were completed by two researchers independently.

Results: A preliminary analysis suggests that medical oncologists perceive that family physicians play an important role in providing support to breast cancer patients undergoing adjuvant treatment. Their opinions diverge regarding family physicians' role in multi-gene expression profile testing. Some oncologists perceive that family physicians do not have sufficient training in the use of specialized tests. They prefer that medical oncologists provide all explanations about test rationale and results. Other oncologists welcome a greater role for family physicians in reinforcing the implications of testing regarding adjuvant chemotherapy and supporting the conversations and decisions that oncologists have with women.

Impact: Information from this study will identify potential roles for family physicians related to multi-gene expression profile testing from the perspectives of medical oncologists. The next step is to understand the views of family physicians in this area and identify training needs and resources.