

Release date: October 21, 2009

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BREAST CANCER PATIENTS HAVE OPTIONS, YET MANY ARE NOT BEING INFORMED

(SEATTLE) – Five hundred thousand women in the U.S. are taking tamoxifen to prevent breast cancer recurrence. Almost half of them have a gene variation that reduces the effectiveness of the drug. For patients with this gene variation, alternative treatments with higher success rates are available. In 2006, an FDA advisory panel recommended updating the tamoxifen label to reflect this important information. However, this update has not been made, even though three additional studies have confirmed the importance of genetic testing for tamoxifen since then.

Ten percent of women have a gene variation which prevents them from producing the enzyme CYP2D6 which is essential for tamoxifen effectiveness. In another thirty-five percent with a gene variation the production of this enzyme is reduced which impedes the effectiveness of tamoxifen. A study published this month in *JAMA*, the Journal of the American Medical Association, reported that these classes of patients had, respectively, a 29% and 20.9% recurrence rate compared to 14.9% for patients without this gene variation.

“We need to remember that these aren’t just numbers, these are women we care about. These are our sisters, and mothers, and friends,” said Howard Coleman Genelex Corporation’s CEO. “We need to start using the tools we have available to ensure that their cancer treatment is as successful as possible.”

National Foundation of Cancer Research (NFCR) has a long history of funding innovative research in the fight against cancer. NFCR is also committed to making sure new technologies are reaching patients who need them. NFCR is working with Genelex to increase awareness of factors, such as this gene variation, which diminish the effectiveness of tamoxifen. NFCR and Genelex also are promoting awareness of alternative treatments for patients who do not respond well to tamoxifen.

“It takes time to move a technology from bench to bedside. When it comes to DNA testing to determine if breast cancer patients are likely to benefit from tamoxifen, that wait needs to end,” stated NCFR President Franklin C. Salisbury, Jr.

Even in patients who do not have this gene variation, the effectiveness of tamoxifen may be impeded inadvertently. Numerous studies have shown that interactions with many prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, and even herbal remedies can reduce tamoxifen effectiveness.

Genelex Corporation offers Tamoxitest which provides an assessment of both risks to tamoxifen effectiveness. Interpretive software included with results alerts patients and their physicians if tamoxifen benefit is at risk as a result either of the gene variation discussed above or interactions with medicines and herbal remedies.

Los Angeles oncologist Dr. Michael Benjamin, MD is one of the first physicians to embrace this technology. "The Genelex gene profiling technology is a powerful tool to help my patients. With tamoxifen testing, we can appropriately individualize treatment based on patients' ability to process the medicine.”

Benjamin regularly advises his patients to take Tamoxitest. “Genelex tamoxifen testing helps me be smarter about who I treat with tamoxifen, and why. I can take the discoveries made in their labs right to the patient’s bedside,” states Benjamin. “I see it as the wave of the future in medicine.”

Maura, a breast cancer patient, says that she ordered Tamoxitest after she was diagnosed. Her healthcare professionals did not discuss Tamoxitest with her. Rather, Maura learned about this valuable test on the Internet. Found to be an intermediate metabolizer, Maura and her doctor opened a dialogue about her dose of tamoxifen. “It was worth the information – and peace of mind – I received,” she concluded. Most insurance companies cover the test.

Breast cancer patients and healthcare providers can learn more about Tamoxitest at www.Tamoxitest.com.

The National Foundation for Cancer Research’s website is www.NFCR.org.

Dr. Michael Benjamin’s website is www.interactMD.com

Reporters seeking comment, or an interview, may call Kristine Ashcraft, Genelex Corporation, at (206) 826-1957. --30--