

## In the news

### EDUCATION IS KEY

Despite the prevalence of breast cancer awareness campaigns, two new studies indicate that many women lack an understanding about their own breast cancer risk and treatment.

Preliminary findings, presented at the 2013 Breast Cancer Symposium in San Francisco, USA, suggest that most women cannot accurately assess their own risk of developing breast cancer. Nearly 10,000 women in New York, USA, were asked to assess their risk prior to mammography screening. Only 9.4% of the women accurately estimated their own risk compared with that calculated using the [Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool](#) from the US National Cancer Institute. The remaining ~90% of women either overestimated or underestimated their own risk, in roughly equal proportions. Jonathan Herman, of Hofstra University in New York, USA, who led the study, said “Women are surrounded by breast cancer awareness messages ... yet our study shows that fewer than one in 10 women have an accurate understanding of their breast cancer risk. That means that our education messaging is far off” ([Chicago Sun-Times](#), 4 Sep 2013).

A separate analysis published in the *British Journal of Cancer* reported that ~40% of women with breast cancer in the United Kingdom who are prescribed tamoxifen are not taking the drug for the recommended 5 years, often owing to undesirable side effects. This can lead to relapse, and the study estimated that this results in more than 400 additional deaths each year in the United Kingdom, as well as additional costs to the UK National Health Service (NHS). “High adherence to tamoxifen would seem to benefit both the patient and the NHS.” said Colin McCowan, of the University of Glasgow, UK, who led the study ([Mail Online](#), 4 Sep 2013). McCowan also noted that his team is trying “to use these findings to develop interventions to help women ... get the most from the lifesaving drugs that we already have.” ([BBC News](#), 4 Sep 2013).

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