Breast Cancer in Men

It is widely known that prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men, but did you know that men can also develop breast cancer? Not only can men get breast cancer, but they can test positive for the BRCA mutations associated with the disease. Through the Information is Power initiative started by HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology, in collaboration with Kailos Genetics, 28–30-year-old men in North Alabama can get a FREE cancer genetic risk test and the test is also being offered at a reduced cost of $129 to adults 19 and over.

How can a man develop breast cancer?
All humans have breast tissue. Women who have gone through puberty have more breast tissue and fully developed duct and lobule to produce and express milk, but the basic structures and tissues are still present in men and tumors can form there.

What are the chances of a man being diagnosed with breast cancer?
Male breast cancer is relatively uncommon with an incidence of about 1 in 1000 men. About 2500 cases of male breast cancer are diagnosed each year in the U.S. For men carrying BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations, the lifetime incidence is 1–5% or 5–10%, respectively.

What are some signs to watch for?
Male breast cancers often present as a painless lump. In some cases men experience bloody nipple discharge or enlargement of the lymph node under their arm. If you notice anything unusual, you should inform your physician. When detected at early stage, the disease is treatable, distant metastases are infrequent, and prognosis is good. Men with high-risk variants can be screened using mammography, although regular self exam is considered sufficient in many cases.

What is the most common type of breast cancer in men?
According to the most recent statistics from the National Cancer Institute’s Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) statistics database, 92% of male breast cancers are estrogen receptor (ER) positive. The tumors most commonly arise from the ductal tissue, just as in women.

Are there any gene mutations, other than BRCA1 and BRCA2, associated with male breast cancer?
BRCA2 is most commonly associated with breast cancer in men with ~10% of cases showing evidence for mutation. BRCA1 mutations are present in 1%. There is some evidence that mutation of CHEK2, PALB2, CYP17 and AR are also associated with increased risk for male breast cancer. CHEK2 and PALB2 are also on the Information is Power panel.

Sources: