



Predicting breast cancer recurrence

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While several factors can help predict breast cancer recurrence, less is known about the influence these factors have on the pattern of recurrence, notably its timing and site, delegates to the 82nd Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told.

Danielle Fitzpatrick, a medical student at the University of Adelaide, told an audience of specialist breast surgeons that recurrence could be predicted by tumour size, grade, oestrogen receptor (ER) status and the degree of lymph node (LN) involvement.

“Our study aimed to identify patient and tumour characteristics that predict risk periods for breast cancer relapse,” Miss Fitzpatrick said.

“We studied a cohort of 473 patients who presented to The Queen Elizabeth Hospital with recurrent breast cancer between 1968 and 2008. Patient and primary tumour characteristics were collected, including age, menopausal status, tumour grade, size (<2 or =2 cm), ER and progesterone receptor (PR) status and LN involvement. These factors were modelled against time to breast cancer relapse using Kaplan-Meier survival curves.

“High tumour grade, size =2cm, ER negativity and PR negativity were all shown to significantly correlate with a higher incidence of earlier recurrence. Patients with ER negative disease who relapsed were almost twice as likely to present within two years of diagnosis than those with ER positive disease.

“Interestingly, LN involvement did not significantly correlate with time to relapse, but was shown to predict site of recurrence. Distant recurrences were found to be higher in node positive patients who relapsed (62%) compared with node negative patients (38%).

“Using these predictors will enable more tailored surveillance strategies with more appropriate discharge to primary care,” Miss Fitzpatrick said.

Approximately 1200 surgeons from New Zealand, Australia and around the world are attending the ASC, which runs from 6 to 10 May and is being held at Auckland’s Skycity/Crowne Plaza Convention Centre.

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