



PRESS RELEASE



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International study examines the impact of breast cancer treatment on cognitive function.

Orlando, FL, USA. At the American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting, an international study has shown that breast cancer patients taking the drug letrozole (Femara®) have better cognitive function (e.g., memory and thinking) than those taking tamoxifen.

The BIG 1-98 Cognitive Function Sub-Study was conducted by the International Breast Cancer Study Group (IBCSG). The study involved postmenopausal women with potentially curable hormone-sensitive breast cancer and compared cognitive function for women taking tamoxifen or letrozole during the fifth year of their breast cancer treatment program.

Most postmenopausal women diagnosed with hormone-sensitive breast cancer take therapies that block or reduce estrogen production such as tamoxifen or letrozole. Some women complain of problems with memory and thinking during and after their breast cancer treatment. Estrogen is known to be important for memory and thinking, however, the possible impact of anti-estrogen therapies has not been fully studied.

The results of the BIG 1-98 Cognitive Function Sub-Study have shown that patients taking letrozole during the fifth year of treatment have better cognitive function than those taking tamoxifen. Presenter Dr. Karin Ribí, a Swiss specialist in quality of life for cancer patients, said, "The study findings were not anticipated but are clearly informative, highlighting the importance of doing this type of clinical research. The results will help women and their doctors weigh the pros and cons of each type of anti-estrogen treatment."

The BIG 1-98 Cognitive Function Sub-Study involved 120 post-menopausal women with hormone receptor positive, early-stage breast cancer who were enrolled in the BIG 1-98 trial and randomly allocated to receive one of the following five year treatment plans:

- five years of tamoxifen alone;
- five years of letrozole alone;
- the sequence of tamoxifen for two years followed by letrozole for three years;
- the sequence of letrozole for two years followed by tamoxifen for three years.

During the fifth year of treatment, objective cognitive function (speed of psychomotor function, visual attention, working and verbal memory, learning) was evaluated by a computerised system that presents the tests as a series of card games and also a 12 word shopping list that women needed to recall after 20 minutes.

The findings of the trial show that women who were taking letrozole during the fifth year of their treatment had better overall cognitive function than those taking tamoxifen, and outperformed patients on tamoxifen for all cognitive tasks. Further results are expected in one year to determine whether this difference persists after women stop taking the medications at the completion of their five years of anti-oestrogen treatment.

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IBCSG

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About The International Breast Cancer Study Group

The International Breast Cancer Study Group (IBCSG) is a non-profit organization founded as the 'Ludwig Breast Cancer Study Group' in 1977, which has always been dedicated to innovative clinical research designed to improve the outcome for women with breast cancer. The IBCSG is headquartered in Bern, Switzerland as a foundation under Swiss law. The Statistical and Data Management Centers are in the United States (Boston, MA and Amherst, NY).

About the Breast International Group

The Breast International Group (BIG) is an international non-profit organization dedicated to serve as a network for large breast cancer trials among its members. The participants are well-established clinical research and cooperative groups based in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada, with affiliated centers around the world.

Additional information regarding BIG 1-98 and IBCSG can be found on the website www.ibcsg.org.

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