

## PRESS RELEASE



**ETOP·IBCSG**  
PARTNERS FOUNDATION  
Foundation for International  
Cancer Research



**BIG** Breast  
International  
Group

Brussels, 18 October 2025

## **NEW REASSURING RESULTS FOR PATIENTS WITH BREAST CANCER WANTING TO HAVE A BABY**

### **PAUSING ENDOCRINE TREATMENT TO ATTEMPT PREGNANCY CAN BE CONSIDERED – NO ADDITIONAL RISK OF RECURRENCES AFTER 5 YEARS**

About 20% of women<sup>1</sup> with breast cancer are diagnosed during their reproductive years and about one-third of these patients with breast cancer hope to have biological children in the future<sup>2</sup>.

Updated results of the POSITIVE study, with approximately 6 years of median follow-up for the participants, will be presented at the 2025 European Society of Medical Oncology (ESMO) Congress. Initial results showed that pausing endocrine treatment in young women with breast cancer does not increase the risk of cancer coming back in the short term<sup>3</sup>. The most recent data, now with additional follow-up time, show that the risk of cancer recurrence was not affected by the treatment pause and that most of the study participants have resumed their treatment after the delivery of their babies and breastfeeding.

#### **Breast cancer in young women**

The majority of young women with early breast cancer have a hormone-sensitive, so-called estrogen receptor-positive (ER+) disease, meaning the cancer cells are stimulated to grow by their own hormones. These women receive endocrine treatment to block the natural production of hormones in order to reduce the risk of the cancer returning. Endocrine therapy may be prescribed for 5-10 years and impacts the ovaries, preventing conception while on treatment.

#### **POSITIVE, a global academic study**

From December 2014 through December 2019, 518 women aged 42 or younger who wanted to become pregnant enrolled in the study, accepting to pause endocrine therapy for approximately two years to try to get pregnant. Before pausing their treatment, the participants had completed between 18 and 30 months of adjuvant endocrine therapy. The study enrolled participants from 116 hospitals across 20 countries, in 4 continents.

The study is being conducted worldwide by the International Breast Cancer Study Group (IBCSG), a division of the ETOP-IBCSG Partners Foundation (the global trial sponsor), in collaboration with the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology (the North American trial sponsor), and with the Breast International Group (BIG). The study concept was initiated within the BIG-NCTN (National Clinical Trials Network) Endocrine Working Group, then developed, and coordinated globally by the IBCSG to address this important, patient-oriented, unmet medical need.

<sup>1</sup> Heer, Emily et al.; Global burden and trends in premenopausal and postmenopausal breast cancer: a population-based study; *The Lancet Global Health*, Volume 8, Issue 8, e1027 - e1037; [Doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(20\)30215-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(20)30215-1)

<sup>2</sup> Mannion, S., Higgins, A., Larson, N. et al. Prevalence and impact of fertility concerns in young women with breast cancer. *Sci Rep* 14, 4418 (2024). [Doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-54961-6](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-54961-6)

<sup>3</sup> Ann H. Partridge, et al. ; Interrupting Endocrine Therapy to Attempt Pregnancy after Breast Cancer; *N Engl J Med* 2023;388:1645-1656; [DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2212856](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa2212856)

Professor David Cameron, BIG Chair: *“BIG grew out of the belief that international collaboration is crucial to finding answers to pressing questions in breast cancer research. Studies like POSITIVE are only possible thanks to the effort of many, working together, and sharing ideas and resources to make a real difference in the lives of patients with breast cancer.”*

## **New reassuring results**

After an average of 6 years of follow-up, researchers have found that the percentage of women participating in POSITIVE whose breast cancer came back (12.3%) was comparable to the percentage in other studies where participants did not pause their treatment (13.2 %).

The percentage of women in POSITIVE who got pregnant was high (76%) and comparable to pregnancy rates among the general population. A total of 440 babies were born during the study, including 18 sets of twins. Most of the study participants have resumed their treatment after delivery and breastfeeding.

These new results confirm that it may be safe to pause endocrine treatment for young women with breast cancer who want to get pregnant. As hormone-sensitive breast cancer may come back even after many years, long-term follow-up until 2029 is planned to determine the risk of recurrence over time.

Dr Fedro Peccatori, IBCSG POSITIVE Study Co-Chair: *“It’s good news for our patients who now have more and longer-term data to safely interrupt endocrine treatment to attempt a pregnancy. After almost 6 years’ median follow-up, the breast cancer free interval at 5 years in POSITIVE is not different from the external SOFT/TEXT control group that did not interrupt treatment. It is also important to note that most patients in the study resumed endocrine treatment at some point. Moreover, pregnancy outcomes remain excellent, and fertility preservation safe and effective”.*

Professor Richard Gelber, IBCSG POSITIVE Trial Senior Statistician: *“The first results of the POSITIVE trial, presented in 2022, showed with short-term follow-up that it was safe for young women with breast cancer to temporarily interrupt taking their anti-cancer hormonal therapy in order to have a baby. We now have updated results with longer-term follow-up confirming the continued safety of this approach, which is very reassuring for both the women and their medical providers.”*

## **About**

### **About the International Breast Cancer Study Group (IBCSG)**

IBCSG as part of ETOP IBCSG Partners Foundation is one of the world’s leading groups in breast cancer research. IBCSG pioneers research in combined hormonal therapy and chemotherapy, timing and duration of adjuvant therapies and quality of life of breast cancer patients. The latest generation of clinical trials in the adjuvant setting addresses tailored treatment for subgroups of patients, as we also expand our research into neoadjuvant treatment, chemotherapy and immunotherapy for advanced disease. In addition to clinical trials, ETOP IBCSG Partners Foundation conduct extensive programs in translational research, database studies, quality of life and statistical methodology. The International Breast Cancer Study Group is dedicated to innovative clinical research to improve the prognosis of women with breast cancer. Patients and investigators from six continents cooperate by participating in extensive clinical trials in breast cancer populations. [www.etop.ibcsq.org](http://www.etop.ibcsq.org)

## About the **Breast International Group**

The Breast International Group (BIG) is a not-for-profit organisation for academic breast cancer research groups from around the world, based in Brussels, Belgium. BIG facilitates breast cancer research at an international level, by stimulating cooperation between its members and other academic networks, and collaborating with, but working independently from, the pharmaceutical industry. Founded by leading European opinion leaders in 1999, BIG now constitutes a network of over 50 collaborative groups and research entities from Europe, Canada, Latin America, Asia and Australasia. These entities are tied to several thousand specialised hospitals and research centres worldwide. ([www.BIGagainstbreastcancer.org](http://www.BIGagainstbreastcancer.org))

## **Funding**

The POSITIVE trial is supported by the ETOP IBCSG Partners Foundation (globally) and the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology (in North America), in collaboration with the Breast International Group (BIG), the BIG cooperative groups, and the National Clinical Trials Network of the National Cancer Institute. Globally, the trial received grant support for central or local trial conduct from the International Breast Cancer Study Group (IBCSG); Frontier Science and Technology Research Foundation; Southern Europe (Frontier Southern Europe); Rising Tide Foundation for Clinical Cancer Research; Pink Ribbon Switzerland; Swiss Cancer League; San Salvatore Foundation; Swiss Group for Clinical Cancer Research; Clinical Cancer Research Foundation of Eastern Switzerland; Ms Elisabetta Pavesi, Roche Diagnostics International; Verein Bärnig, Swiss Cancer Foundation; Ms Christine Hafner and Mr Marc Wyss, Piajoh Fondazione di Famiglia; Gruppo Giovani Pazienti “Anna dai Capelli Corti”; and Schweizer Frauenlauf Bern—all in Switzerland; BIG Against Breast Cancer and the Baillet Latour Fund, Nationale Ioterij/Loterie nationale Belgium; Gateway for Cancer Research and Breast Cancer Research Foundation—both in the United States; Fondazione Umberto Veronesi, Italy; C & A, Germany; Dutch Cancer Society, the Netherlands; Norwegian Breast Cancer Society and Pink Ribbon—both in Norway; ELGC K.K. and Pink Ring—both in Japan; Mr Yong Seop Lee, Ms Sun Hee Kang, and Korean Breast Cancer Foundation—all in South Korea; and other private donors. In North America, the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology receives support from the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Canada Foundation for Innovation, RETHINK Breast Cancer, Canada, and the Gilson Family Foundation, United States.

## **Note to the editor – not for publication:**

Pictures can be downloaded here:  [BIG Time](#)

For more information you may contact:

BIG press address:

DGA

Celien De Weerd:

[celien.deweerd@dgagroup.com](mailto:celien.deweerd@dgagroup.com)

Chloé Saucin:

[chloe.saucin@dgagroup.com](mailto:chloe.saucin@dgagroup.com)

IBCSG press address:

[press@etop.ibcsg.org](mailto:press@etop.ibcsg.org)

or IBCSG Head of Program for

Young Patients: Monica Ruggeri

[Monica.Ruggeri@etop.ibcsg.org](mailto:Monica.Ruggeri@etop.ibcsg.org)