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Many parents at-risk for cancer disclose genetic test results to children

Predictive genetic testing for adult-onset diseases, including cancer, is generally discouraged until the age at which interventions are believed to be helpful. Yet, many children of BRCA mutation carriers learn of their parents genetic test results many years before preventive interventions are indicated.

A new study in the Aug. 20 Journal of Clinical Oncology, describes the prevalence and experiences of parental communication of BRCA results to children under the age of 25 years old.

More than half of the parents told their children about their genetic test results. Some parents reported that their children didn't seem to understand the significance of the information shared, and that some had initial negative reactions. Further research is needed to understand the impact of this communication on these children in order to provide optimal counseling for families with a genetic risk of cancer, said the study's author, Angela Bradbury, M.D., director of Fox Chase Cancer Center's Family Risk Assessment Program.

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