



Health Bulletin



New Blood Test Helps Patients With Advanced Breast Cancer Cope With The Unknown

(NAPSA)—More American women are living with advanced or stage IV breast cancer than ever before. The five-year survival rate is 26.17 percent, and some women are living 15-20 years with the disease; however, being diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer isn't easy. Not knowing what's going on inside your body is frightening.

Mindy Bradley, a 44-year-old Dallas woman living with advanced breast cancer, understands what it feels like to cope with the unknown. After coming out of remission, she is battling breast cancer for the second time; but she hasn't given up hope. A new blood test, called the CellSearch™ Circulating Tumor Cell Test, is now available at various hospitals, cancer centers and labs across the U.S. to help women such as Mindy find some answers.

The CellSearch test is the first for counting circulating tumor cells (CTCs) in patients with advanced breast cancer to predict survival. CTCs are cancer cells that have detached from a solid tumor and entered the bloodstream. Developed by Immunicon Corporation of Huntingdon Valley, Pa. and exclusively marketed by Veridex LLC, a Johnson & Johnson company, this test is used to capture, count and characterize



CTCs in a sample of blood and can suggest to an oncologist whether a treatment is working. Clinical studies reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* have shown that five or more CTCs in a 7.5 ml blood sample is an indicator of decreased overall survival.

Why is this so important for patients with metastatic breast cancer? "Patients can learn the results of their treatment sooner rather than later," said Byron Hewett, President and CEO of Immunicon Corporation. "Traditional imaging scans can only be done every three to six months, during which time patients can become anxious, wondering if their cancer has spread or whether they are in remission. Oncologists can use this test to

help determine a patient's status based on CTC count within three to four weeks after therapy. A CTC count of five or more is predictive of shorter progression-free survival and overall survival."

Mindy's oncologist, Dr. John Nemunaitis, Executive Medical Director at the Mary Crowley Medical Research Center in Dallas, Texas, recently used the CellSearch test to scan for CTCs. The numbers were high enough that he decided to order a PET scan, which showed several areas of cancer in Mindy's body. Before beginning experimental therapy at Mary Crowley, Mindy received four months of more chemotherapy along with Herceptin®, hoping this would reduce the tumors. Tests indicated that the tumors did not respond to the chemotherapy, so she began a clinical trial at Mary Crowley.

"I believe in my heart of hearts that had I waited and continued with the conventional method, I would not be alive," said Mindy. "I believe that this particular test has given me a chance to fight this disease with the many new treatments coming out and I hope it has saved my life."

For more information on the CellSearch test and circulating tumor cells, visit www.immunicon.com or www.veridex.com.