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## 'Radiotherapy reduces breast cancer mortality'

Kounteya Sinha, TNN Oct 21, 2011, 01:26AM IST

Tags: Radiotherapy | Lancet | breast cancer

NEW DELHI: A new study says after breast-conserving surgery, radiotherapy to the conserved breast halves the rate at which the disease recurs in the next 10 years and reduces breast cancer death rate by about a sixth in the next 15 years.

These proportional benefits vary marginally among different groups of women, the study has concluded on the basis of analysis of 10,801 breast cancer patients and 17 trials. This is the largest study on the topic till date.

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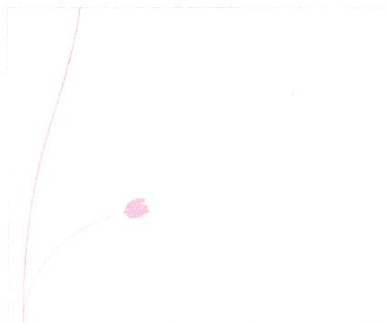
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Published in the medical journal 'The Lancet' on Thursday, it says the reduction in cancer recurrence is seen within the first year after radiotherapy and lasts throughout the first decade. Within 10 years of the diagnosis, 35% of women, who did not have radiotherapy, had a recurrence as compared to only 19% who had radiotherapy.

The effect of radiation on breast cancer mortality takes longer to appear than its effect on recurrence. However, within 15 years of diagnosis, 25% of women, who did not have radiotherapy, had died as compared to only 21% who had radiotherapy.

Dr Hemant Singhal, director, Medanta Breast Service said, in the West, 80% of women would undergo breast-conserving surgery. But in India more patients are forced to undergo full removal of breast since tumours are larger.

"Around 3%-5% of women get local recurrence of the cancer. For many with early-stage breast cancer, breast-conserving surgery can remove any macroscopic disease that has been detected. However some microscopic tumour might remain that could lead to recurrence. If cancer is detected early, the breast can be saved," Dr Singhal said.

Dr Anupama Hooda Nehra, chief of medical oncology at Max Hospital, said, "For women who undergo breast-conserving surgery, a six-week radiation regimen is compulsory. Risk of local resurgence of the cancer is double among women who undergo a breast-conserving surgery and don't get radiation as compared to those who undergo mastectomy."

The authors of 'From the Early Breast Cancer Trialists' Collaborative Group' say: "The findings show that radiotherapy after breast-conserving surgery not only substantially reduces the risk of recurrence but also moderately reduces the risk of death from breast cancer."

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