

GEMs offer brief updates from general practice research tackling the challenges of front-line practice.

Title:

No association between breast pain and breast cancer: a prospective cohort study of 10,830 symptomatic women presenting to a breast cancer diagnostic clinic

The clinical problem tackled by this research

- To investigate breast cancer incidence in women presenting with breast pain and establish health economics of referring women with breast pain to secondary care
- Women with breast pain are often anxious that this symptom may represent an underlying breast Cancer. NICE guidance on suspected breast cancer diagnosis does not feature breast pain alone as a symptom of concern. Despite this high numbers of women with breast pain are referred to breast diagnostic clinics rule out breast cancer.

What this research tells us about the problem

- The incidence of breast cancer in women with breast pain alone (no associated symptoms of lumps/ nipple discharge) is 0.4%. This figure similar to that seen in asymptomatic women invited for breast screening.
- Economic analysis confirms that referral of women with breast pain alone to secondary care is associated with increased cost but no additional health benefits.
- Women with breast pain should be reassured that they are at no greater risk of breast cancer than asymptomatic women.

The research team (*GPs)

Prof Willie Hamilton

Suggested WISE Action

- 1) Consider sharing this video about breast pain (by GP Dr Afsana Safa) with your patients. Dr Safa explains the causes of breast pain, self-help measures and why breast pain is not considered to be a sign of more serious disease. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0FkthTQggc>
- 2) Review practice 2WW referrals to Breast clinic and discuss any which were for breast pain only for learning purposes.

Where you can read more about this work

Published article: Dave R, Bromley H, Taxiarchi V, Camacho E, Chatterjee S, Barnes N, Hutchison G, Bishop P, Hamilton W, Kirwan C, Gandhi A. No association between breast pain and breast cancer: a prospective cohort study of 10,830 symptomatic women presenting to a Breast Cancer Diagnostic Clinic. British Journal of General Practice (BJGP). December 2021: 0475.

Who funded this work

No external funding disclosed.