Cancer Risk Remains a Concern for DES Daughters As They Age


Reviewed by Fran Howell

New statistics from a population-based assessment tell an unsettling story none of us wanted to hear. While it is well documented that young DES Daughters are at increased risk for clear cell adenocarcinoma (CCA) of the vagina and cervix, this new analysis also suggests an elevated risk for DES Daughters as they age.

The assessment was done by researchers with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Cancer and Prevention Control who used data from two federal cancer surveillance programs: the National Program of Cancer Registries (NPCR) from CDC and the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Program from the National Cancer Institute.

Clear cell adenocarcinoma diagnosis rates for women born between 1947 – 1971 were compared with reported CCA diagnosis rates for women born before and after that peak DES-use period.

By identifying CCA statistics for individuals born in years when DES was rarely prescribed, the scientists extrapolated expected numbers of CCA cases for those born during years when DES was the standard of care for problem pregnancies. What they found was disconcerting.

“More cases of CCA than expected were diagnosed among women aged 40-54 who were born when DES was frequently prescribed,” says Mary C. White, continued on page 7

Pap is prudent to check the vagina even if the cervix is removed in a hysterectomy.

For directions to give your doctor on how a proper DES Daughter Pap/pelvic exam should be done go to: http://www.desaction.org/desdaughters.htm

White suggests a question about prenatal DES exposure be included on medical intake forms. “Doctors should have this relevant information when recommending Pap exams based on a woman’s risks.”

As is often the case, those of us in the DES community stay better informed on DES issues than most doctors. Therefore, DES Daughters may want to share this new study with telling doctors they want a Pap/pelvic exam every year. There is clearly no known upper age limit for the increased CCA cervical/vaginal cancer risk for DES Daughters.