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BIOLOGICAL NATURE OF FAMILIAL BREAST CANCER IN EGYPT

Thesis

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LIST OF CONTENTS

Title	Page No.
Introduction.....	1
Aim of the Work.....	3
<u>Review of Literature</u>	
• Anatomy of The Breast	4
• Types of Breast Cancer	14
• Biology of Breast Cancer	16
• Risk Factors of Familial Breast Cancer.....	48
Patients And Methods.....	151
Results	157
Discussion	173
Summary & Conclusion	180
References.....	185
Arabic Summary	—

LIST OF TABLES

Tab. No.	Title	Page No.
Table (1):	Expression of different immunohistochemical markers in BRCA1 and BRCA2 sennline mutation related breast cancers rektive to sporadic breast cancers	66
Table (2):	Chromosomal loci showing significant differences in frequency of gain or loss by array comparative genomic hybridization between BRCA1 and BRCA2 related and sporadic breast cancers.....	70
Table (3):	Summary of the syndromes associated with hereditary breast cancer.....	80
Table (4):	Breast cysts and definition	103
Table (5):	Frequency of the studied groups	157
Table (6):	Comparison between familial breast cancer and non familial breast cancer groups as regards age (years).....	157
Table (7):	Comparison between Familial and non Familial groups as regards tumor size (cm).....	158
Table (8):	Comparison between Familial and non Familial groups as regards tumor grade.....	159
Table (9):	Comparison between Familial and non Familial groups as regards affected lymph nodes number	160
Table (10):	Comparison between Familial and non Familial groups as regards type of operation	161
Table (11):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards pathological type of tumor	162
Table (12):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards HER-2 neu receptors.....	163
Table (13):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards estrogen receptors	164

LIST OF TABLES (Cont...)

Tab. No.	Title	Page No.
Table (14):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards progesterone receptors.....	165
Table (15):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards laterality of breast cancer.....	166
Table (16):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards BRCA1 & BRCA2 genes	167
Table (17):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards mammographic density.....	168
Table (18):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards the presentation of the patients	169
Table (19):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards the oral contraception.....	170
Table (20):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards the body mass index (BMI)	171
Table (21):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards the alcohol intake.....	172

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. No.	Title	Page No.
Figure (1):	The relations of the breast	5
Figure (2):	Changes in the breast during lactation	8
Figure (3):	Blood supply of the breast.....	10
Figure (4):	Lymph vessels of the breast and the axillary lymph nodes.....	12
Figure (5):	Incidence of breast cancer.	14
Figure (6):	Incidence of breast cancer.	15
Figure (7):	Emergence of a cancer cell from a normal one.....	18
Figure (8):	Duct carcinoma insitu.cribriform type (H&E stain, X200)	22
Figure (9):	Lobular carcinoma in situ (H & E stain, X 40).	23
Figure (10):	Invasive ductal carcinoma(H&E stain,X 400).	25
Figure (11):	Infiltrating tubular carcinoma(H&E stain,X 400).	26
Figure (12):	Apocrine carcinoma.	27
Figure (13):	Juvenile (secretory) carcinoma.	28
Figure (14):	Metaplastic carcinoma.	29
Figure (15):	Inflammatory breast carcinoma.	30
Figure (16):	Microscopic picture of inflammatory breast cancer (cancer cells in dermal lymphatics).	31
Figure (17):	Paget's disease of the nipple.	32
Figure (18):	Microscopic picture of Paget's disease of the nipple (H&E stain, X 40).	32
Figure (19):	Invasive lobular carcinoma (stain H&E, X 40).	33
Figure (20):	Histiocytoid carcinoma (Stain H&E, X 40).	34

LIST OF FIGURES (Cont...)

Fig. No.	Title	Page No.
Figure (21):	Clinical Assessment.	38
Figure (22):	Inflammatory breast cancer.	39
Figure (23):	Paget's disease of the nipple.	39
Figure (24):	Liver metastasis from breast cancer.....	40
Figure (25):	Breast ultrasound.	41
Figure (26):	Breast ultrasound.	41
Figure (27):	Mammography of breast cancer	42
Figure (28):	Prognosis of breast cancer.	47
Figure (29):	Schematic representation of BRCA1 and BRCA2 functional domains and selected binding partners	56
Figure (30):	Affected genes in hereditary breast cancer.....	83
Figure (31):	Cumulative risk of breast (diamonds) and ovarian (squares) cancer in BRCA1 mutation carriers.....	139
Figure (32):	A high risk family	144
Figure (33):	The normal cells of BRCA carriers carry one normal copy and one mutated copy of BRCA gene.....	144
Figure (34):	Tumour cells in BRCA carriers have no normal copies of the BRCA gene, and therefore BRCA deficient.....	144
Figure (35):	The multi-step model of earcinogenesis allows for loss of tumour suppressor genes playing an important role in the process	145
Figure (36):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards affected lymph nodes number.....	160

LIST OF FIGURES (Cont...)

Fig. No.	Title	Page No.
Figure (37):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards BRCA1 & BRCA2 genes.....	167
Figure (38):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards the oral contraception.	170
Figure (39):	Comparison between familial and non familial groups as regards the body weight (BMI).	171

INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is a major global problem with nearly one million cases occurring each year over the past several decades, the disease incidence has raised world wide, in both developing and developed countries (*Kurian et al., 2011*).

A number of factors have been identified that increase the risk of breast cancer. One of the strongest of these risk factors is the history of breast cancer in a relative. About 15-20% of women with breast cancer has such a family history of the disease, clearly reflecting the participation of inherited (genetic) components in the development of some breast cancers. Dominant breast cancer susceptibility genes, including BRCA1 and BRCA2, appear responsible for about 5% of all breast cancer (*Kurian et al., 2011*).

Familial breast cancer is characterized by young age at diagnosis, an increased risk of bilateral breast cancer, an increasing risk in conjunction with increasing numbers of affected family members, and a strong association with ovarian cancer (*Greene, 2010*).

Individuals with breast cancer have a 20-30% chance of having at least one relative with the disease. However, only 5-10% of the cases are a direct result of gene mutations in highly penetrable genes, such as BRCA1 and BRCA2 (BRCA1/2) as well as gene TP53 (*Edlich et al., 2009*).

The function of these two genes is classified as tumour suppressors, is linked with key metabolic mechanisms such as DNA damage repair, regulation of gene expression and cell cycle control. The pathological BRCA allelic variants may cause alteration of protein function, transcriptional activity and DNA repair. Accumulation of the defects leads to widespread chromosome instability that may be directly responsible for cancer formation (*Kurian et al., 2011*).

Owing to the significant breast cancer risk associated with BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations, women with these mutations have several options available to them by which to reduce the risk of breast cancer. These include surgical (prophylactic mastectomy and prophylactic oophorectomy) and medical (chemoprevention) options. The breast cancer risk reductions associated with these options range from a 90% risk reduction associated with prophylactic mastectomy to approximately 50% with oophorectomy or tamoxifen. This is a major decision that requires time and a multidisciplinary approach (*Metcalfe, 2009*).

AIM OF THE WORK

The aim of our work is to provide an overview of the demographics, pathological types and biological nature of familial breast cancer in Egypt in order to discover the potential targets for prevention of familial breast cancer.

ANATOMY OF THE BREAST

Breast

The breasts form a secondary sexual feature of females and are the source of nutrition for the neonate. They are also present in a rudimentary form in males. The breast are the site of malignant change in as many as one in ten women (*Ellis et al., 2008*).

Developmental anatomy

In humans, the breast develops on the ventral side of the embryo from a narrow ectodermal thickening that extends from the axilla to the inguinal area bilaterally (*Spratt, 2009*).

This milk line or milk streak is present by the fifth week of fetal life. On the sixth or seventh week, each streak has atrophied except for the pectoral sites at which the future breasts will develop.

At 8 to 10 years of age, when under hormonal stimulation the ducts extend into the superficial pectoral fascia and arborize within a special supporting stroma to form collecting ducts and terminal duct lobular units (*Spratt, 2009*).

Topographic anatomy:

The breast lies upon the deep pectoral fascia, which in turn overlies pectoralis major and serratus anterior

superiorly and external oblique and its aponeurosis (as the latter forms the anterior wall of the sheath of rectus abdominis) inferiorly. Between the breast and the deep fascia the loose connective tissue in the submammary space allows the breast some degree of movement on the deep pectoral fascia. Advanced mammary carcinoma may, by invasion, cause tethering or fixation of the breast to the underlying musculature. Occasionally, small projections of glandular tissue may pass through the deep fascia into the underlying muscle in normal subjects (*Fry, 2009*).

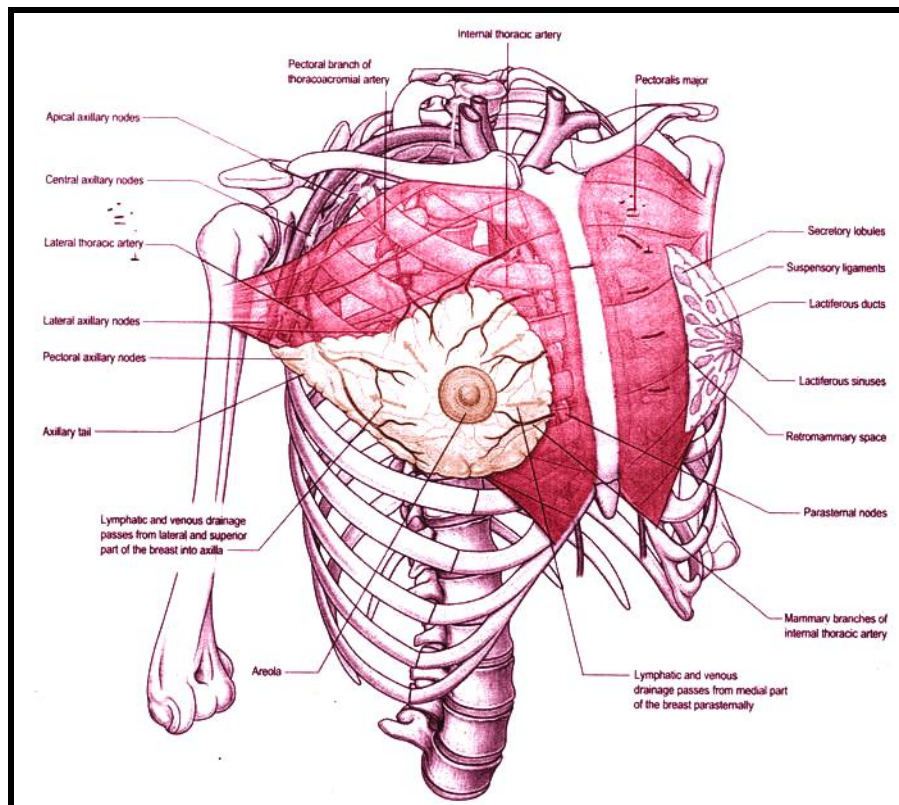


Figure (1): The relations of the breast (*Fry, 2005*).