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Effective Cancer Screening and Prevention

There has been controversy in recent years about the benefit of screening mammography in identifying breast cancer and reducing its mortality rate. However, an update from the International Agency for Research on Cancer has recently concluded that regular screening mammography for women 50-69 reduces mortality from breast cancer by 40%. These results did not extend to younger age groups, a factor that possibly confounded previous data analysis.

New Tool for Determining Cancer Risk

The more tools we have for detecting cancers, the better. A new test being developed, called the Polygenic Risk Score (PRS), is improving the accurate prediction of breast cancer, when considered alongside family history and breast density information. PRS looks at genetic information, based on 76 nucleotides which account for up to 14% of breast cancers, and could improve prevention measures and assist in targeting chemotherapy.

There appears to be some difference in breast cancer survival rate based on ethnicity – that cannot be explained by socio-economic circumstances such as access to care. The examination of one database revealed that Japanese women had the highest breast cancer survival rate, followed by Caucasian, South Asian, and then black women. Recognizing this variation in survival rate might help to focus on intrinsic biologic differences – allowing for tailored treatment choices in the future.

Lifestyles Choices Impact Risk

Even more evidence that lifestyle choices can benefit health has been confirmed by two recently published American studies. One found that increasing plant-based foods, reducing alcohol and maintain a healthy weight improved cancer risk by up to 71%, depending on cancer type. The second also noted that healthy body weight maintenance, in conjunction with exercise, reduced some cancers by up to 65%. The research is quite compelling.

Research is leading to cancer prevention strategies, improving cancer detection and better targeting treatments. As a result, many are living cancer-free and beating the old odds. "Cancer can be beaten!"