

Press Release

THE “BIG RADIO TUNING” CLINICAL STUDY (EXPERT)

The societal impact of this academic study on breast cancer could be substantial

Brussels, 1 October 2019 - **The results of this study could influence how 2 in 5 women with breast cancer are treated**. If the study proves that certain patients do not need radiation therapy, many women affected by this disease may be spared its potential side effects; health care systems could also make significant savings. Read on to find out more about the **BIG Radio Tuning** study (scientific name: **EXPERT**).

The aim of the BIG Radio Tuning study is to better analyse the risk profile of tumours in order to identify which women could safely avoid radiation therapy in the future. In this study, those qualifying as “low-risk” patients according to a 50-gene test will then receive either hormone treatment, or hormone treatment combined with radiation therapy. The study hopes to show that both groups do well and that, therefore, patients classified as “low-risk” according to the test may be spared radiation therapy in the future. In 2019, 29 hospitals were already actively involved out of the 90 hospitals that will participate in the study. By 19 September 2019, 231 of a total of 1,170 patients had already been included.

In the treatment of breast cancer, after surgically removing the tumour, radiation therapy is administered to patients with the goal of limiting the risk of the cancer recurring. Like adjusting your radio to find the right frequency, the BIG Radio Tuning study aims to better define the tumour’s risk profile in order to personalise the intensity of the radiation therapy, even going as far as to avoid it altogether.

Having begun in Australia and New Zealand under the leadership of Breast Cancer Trials, the study will now be extended internationally thanks to the Brussels-based Breast International Group (BIG).

The prospect of safely de-escalating radiation therapy is of great interest to many patients, who will appreciate not having to be subjected to a treatment that will not benefit them significantly if their tumours are low-risk, while ensuring that patients at greater risk of relapse do receive treatment of an appropriate intensity.

Radiation therapy has common side-effects such as fatigue, skin burns, breast tenderness, swelling and scarring, which may cause adverse aesthetic effects. Uncommonly radiation therapy may cause complications of the heart and lung, and radiation-related cancer. For low-risk patients, these side-effects could be effectively avoided in the future if the BIG Radio Tuning study demonstrates what it believes to be possible.

“More recent research in early breast cancer has focused on minimising the side-effects and practical burden of treatment without increasing a patient’s risk of breast cancer recurrence. We believe that knowledge about cancer biology can help us identify patients who can safely avoid radiation therapy, but continuing research is necessary to determine whether this is true. BIG Radio Tuning (EXPERT) sets out to answer this question through international partnership,” explains Professor Boon Chua, Principal Investigator of the EXPERT study. She is Radiation Oncologist and Director of Cancer and Haematology Services at the University of New South Wales and Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney, Australia. Professor Chua is also Executive Board member of BIG and Radiation Oncology Lead of Breast Cancer Trials Australia and New Zealand.

This year, BIG is celebrating 20 years of scientific collaboration and breast cancer research.

Some figures:

- * In Belgium, more than 10,000 women develop breast cancer each year
- * 800,000 people a year worldwide develop breast cancer
- * Recruitment for the BIG Radio Tuning (EXPERT) study began in Australia in 2017 and should be completed, with the help of BIG, by 2023
- * Patients will be monitored for 10 years
- * The total budget for this study is estimated at €6,300,000 over 17 years (the equivalent of about €1 per day per patient)

<https://research.bigagainstbreastcancer.org/clinical-trials/expert-big16-02>

PRESS CONTACT

BIG against breast cancer
Breast International Group (BIG)

Valerie Van der Veecken
Tel: +32 2 486 1613

Gia Questiaux
Tel: +32 2 486 1611

E-mail: communications@bigagainstbc.org

About BIG against breast cancer (BIG = Breast International Group)

The Breast International Group (BIG) is an international not-for-profit organisation for academic breast cancer research groups from around the world, based in Brussels, Belgium.

Global collaboration is crucial to make significant advances in breast cancer research, reduce unnecessary duplication of effort, share data, contribute to the faster development of better treatments, and increase the likelihood of cures for patients. Therefore, BIG facilitates breast cancer research at international level, by stimulating cooperation between its members and other academic networks, and collaborating with, but working independently from, the pharmaceutical industry.

Founded by leading European opinion leaders in 1999, BIG now constitutes a network of 57 collaborative groups from Europe, Canada, Latin America, Asia and Australasia. These entities are tied to several thousand specialised hospitals and research centres worldwide. More than 30 clinical trials are run or are under development under the BIG umbrella at any one time. BIG also works closely with the US National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the North American Breast Cancer Groups (NABCG), so that together they act as a strong integrating force in the breast cancer research arena.

For more information about BIG, please visit the website www.BIGagainstbreastcancer.org

About BCT-ANZ

The international clinical trial EXPERT is led by Breast Cancer Trials (BCT-ANZ), in close collaboration with BIG. BCT-ANZ, the largest oncology clinical trials group in Australia and New Zealand, has been conducting a clinical trials research programme into the treatment and prevention of breast cancer for more than 40 years. The research programme involves almost 800 members in 102 institutions and more than 15,700 women have participated in BCT-ANZ's clinical trials. BCT-ANZ is a member of the BIG network.

For more information about BCT-ANZ, please visit the website www.breastcancertrials.org.au