



## THYROID CANCER

### Is a family history of any cancer a risk for thyroid cancer?

#### BACKGROUND

Thyroid cancer is common and appears to be increasing in incidence. Indeed, thyroid cancer is the fastest rising cancer diagnosed in women. Most thyroid cancer generally is associated with an excellent prognosis. While certain types of thyroid cancer run in families, the vast majority do not have a family history of thyroid cancer. However, some studies suggest that thyroid cancer may run in families with other types of cancer. The aim of this study was to examine the association of a family history of cancer in patients with thyroid cancer.

#### THE FULL ARTICLE TITLE:

Xu L et al. Family history of cancer and risk of sporadic differentiated thyroid carcinoma. *Cancer*. 2011. Epub online publication July 28, 2011.

#### SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study was performed at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Texas. This study compared 3 groups of individuals and assessed whether there was an association between family history of cancer and risk of thyroid cancer. The patients were divided into 3 groups studied: 1) 288 patients with thyroid cancer, 2) 188 patients with

thyroid nodules without cancer and 3) 591 patients with no thyroid disease. Patients completed a survey regarding their family history of cancer. A family history of any type of cancer was reported by 49% of the thyroid cancer group, 55% of the thyroid nodule group and 58% of the individuals without thyroid disease. However, while only 6.3% of patients with thyroid cancer had a family history of thyroid cancer, this was >4 times more common than in the individuals without thyroid disease. All of these cancers were papillary thyroid cancer. Having a family history of thyroid cancer was also more common in patients with thyroid nodules.

#### WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY?

While the overall likelihood is low, individuals with a family history of thyroid cancer appear to be at increased risk for developing thyroid cancer of their own.

—Whitney Woodmansee, MD

#### ATA THYROID BROCHURE LINKS

Thyroid cancer: [http://thyroid.org/patients/patient\\_brochures/cancer\\_of\\_thyroid.html](http://thyroid.org/patients/patient_brochures/cancer_of_thyroid.html)

#### ABBREVIATIONS & DEFINITIONS

**Thyroid nodule:** an abnormal growth of thyroid cells that forms a lump within the thyroid. While most thyroid

nodules are non-cancerous (benign), ~5% are cancerous.

**Papillary thyroid cancer:** the most common type of thyroid cancer.