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Using genetic and pharmacological approaches, [Joan Massagué, PhD](#), Chair of MSKCC's [Cancer Biology and Genetics Program](#) and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, and colleagues showed how four genes facilitate the formation of new tumor blood vessels, the release of cancer cells into the bloodstream, and the penetration of tumor cells from the bloodstream into the lung. The gene set comprises EREG (an epidermal growth factor receptor ligand), the cyclooxygenase COX2, and MMP1 and MMP2 (matrix enzymes that are expressed in human breast cancer cells).

The researchers conclude that drug combinations that target one or more of the proteins encoded by these genes may prove useful for treating metastatic breast cancer.

The following Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center investigators contributed to the work: Gaorav P. Gupta, [Don X. Nguyen](#), Anne C. Chiang, [Paula D. Bos](#), Juliet Y. Kim, Cristina Nadal, [Roger R. Gomis](#), Katia Todorova-Manova, and Joan Massagué.

Journalists may contact the Department of Marketing & Communications for more information.

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