



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

Community M A T T E R S

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NEWS FROM MEMORIAL SLOAN KETTERING CANCER CENTER

Making Sense of Genetic Testing



Multigene panel testing enables people to learn about not just one but many inherited genetic mutations at once.

"While everyone has some risk of developing cancer, a small percentage of the population [no more than 5 to 10 percent] are genetically predisposed — and therefore at higher risk than the general public — to developing certain types of cancer," said Mark Robson, Clinic Director of Memorial Sloan Kettering's Clinical Genetics Service. For some people, learning that they carry a cancer-causing genetic mutation may spur them to take preventive action.

What is multigene panel testing and how does it work?

With the introduction of a technology called multigene panel testing, people can learn about not just one but many inherited mutations — which are present in the body's cells at birth — at once. This technology, introduced in the United States in 2013, enables doctors to simultaneously examine dozens of cancer genes at a cost that is comparable to that of tests for individual genes.

Multigene genetic testing looks for inherited mutations in genes associated with an increased risk of hereditary colorectal, breast, uterine, and diffuse gastric cancer, among others. One vial of blood can shed light on a spectrum of predisposition and risk.

Would this type of testing be helpful to me?

Genetic testing may be recommended for individuals at higher risk for cancer, including those diagnosed with cancer at a very young age and families with multiple cases of cancer. Knowing more about their risk for the more than 50 hereditary cancer syndromes identified to date can, in some cases, provide people with an opportunity to do something to prevent a cancer, if such measures are available. Women with mutations in the *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* genes, for example, may pursue surgery to help prevent breast cancer.

In some cases, however, next steps aren't so clear, and the best treatment options aren't known. For instance, we don't yet have enough information to guide people in prevention strategies for several of the genes included in the multigene panel testing. In other words, you may get information about having inherited a cancer risk that we don't understand well or for which we don't have any treatment strategies to offer. A multi-institutional effort (see www.promptstudy.org) is under

way to learn more about these genes.

That's why it's essential that anyone seeking testing work with a genetics counselor or other professional who specializes in hereditary cancer and cancer risk assessment to decide if genetic testing is appropriate and to interpret the results. For more information about genetic testing, visit www.mskcc.org/genetic-testing.

A Green Thumbs Up

Keeping our patients, staff, and community healthy is a daily goal for MSK, and we are proud to do our part in supporting a healthy, greener environment. Practice Greenhealth recently recognized MSK's sustainability efforts with a Top 25 Environmental Excellence Award, which designates us as one of the country's top hospitals in terms of sustainability practices — and which marks the first time a New York City hospital has been honored at this level. MSK also received special recognition in the areas of green building, greening the OR, climate, and food.

We Don't Want to Lose You

As part of MSK's larger efforts to go green, this publication is becoming an e-newsletter! You will no longer be receiving a copy in the mail, but we don't want to lose touch. Please send your email address to communityaffairs@mskcc.org to receive *Community Matters* electronically.

Changing How the World Treats Cancer



The operating room may have looked different, but the goal was the same: to help people with cancer. MSK surgeons Peter Kingham, Martin Weiser, and Josh Smith and molecular biologist Brooke Sylvester traveled to Nigeria to meet with members of the African Colorectal Cancer Group, a consortium of five Nigerian hospitals that collaborates with MSK.

Martin Weiser (right) helps train Nigerian clinicians. The surgical team shown here is resecting a colorectal cancer.



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New Construction Updates

Construction of New Outpatient Care Center Begins

In May, we began construction on the David H. Koch Center for Cancer Care at 74th Street and the FDR Drive. The 23-story building will provide the most advanced outpatient cancer treatments in a dynamic space designed with the needs of patients firmly in mind, including a pioneering outpatient bone marrow transplant unit, as well as programs for patients with lung,

head and neck, and hematologic cancers.

“The creation of this outstanding facility will be a real game-changer for Memorial Sloan Kettering,” said MSK President and Chief Executive Officer Craig B. Thompson. “The knowledge gained from the work conducted inside the David H. Koch Center for Cancer Care will benefit cancer patients around the world.”

Construction of this facility is scheduled for completion in 2019.

Excavation Concludes at Laboratory Medicine Building

We have completed excavation to three floors below grade at the 327 East 64th Street site. Work to establish the foundation and structural framework has begun and will continue into 2016, with project completion estimated by mid-2017.