

## Press Release

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### German study is first to link RAD51C gene mutations to human cancer: **Scientists Identify New Breast Cancer Susceptibility Gene**

The discovery 15 years ago that the genes BRCA1 and BRCA2 confer high risks for breast and ovarian cancer was a breakthrough for cancer prediction and therapy, especially for familial cases. Now, the research group of Prof. Alfons Meindl (Klinikum rechts der Isar of the Technische Universität München), in collaboration with other groups from Germany, the U.K., and the U.S., can identify another gene that increases susceptibility to breast and ovarian cancer. Their results have been published online in *Nature Genetics*. The identification of such high risk-conferring genes is a prerequisite for offering women tailored early recognition programs and more individualized therapies.

The gene newly identified as causing breast and ovarian cancer in familial cases is designated RAD51C. It is, like BRCA1 and BRCA2, essential for DNA repair within cells. Mutations in the gene can therefore cause either breast or ovarian cancer. In six out of 480 pedigrees with occurrence of breast and/or ovarian cancer, mutations within the *RAD51C* gene were found. The risk for breast cancer in women with the mutation of RAD51C is 60 to 80 percent, for ovarian cancer 20 to 40 percent. As the cancers in such families were diagnosed significantly earlier than in women who developed sporadic breast or ovarian cancer, experts might also call the newly identified gene *BRCA3*.

"These results reinforce our assumption that various rare gene mutations contribute to hereditary breast and ovarian cancer. The now known genes that predispose women to breast and/or ovarian cancer only explain 60 percent of the high-risk families," says Professor Alfons Meindl, Klinikum rechts der Isar, but novel technologies allow the rapid identification of other such rarely mutated disease-causing genes.

"We are also optimistic that in the future the individual breast cancer risks for the majority of women can be determined. These risk predictions will allow the offering of tailored prevention and small meshed early recognition programs. Risk-aligned prevention will become a new clinical area," explains Prof. Dr. Rita Schmutzler of the University Hospital of Cologne, one of the other main authors of the article.

Technische Universität München Corporate Communications Center 80290 München

Name	Position	Telefon	E-Mail
Dr. Ulrich Marsch	Sprecher des Präsidenten	+49 89 289 22779	marsch@zv.tum.de
Dr. Markus Bernards	Media Relations Manager	+49 89 289 22562	bernards@zv.tum.de

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**Contact:**

Prof. Alfons Meindl  
Technische Universität München  
Fakultät für Medizin  
Tel: +49 89 4140 6750  
E-Mail: [alfons.meindl@lrz.tum.de](mailto:alfons.meindl@lrz.tum.de)

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Technische Universität München Corporate Communications Center 80290 München

Name	Position	Telefon	E-Mail
Dr. Ulrich Marsch	Sprecher des Präsidenten	+49 89 289 22779	<a href="mailto:marsch@zv.tum.de">marsch@zv.tum.de</a>
Dr. Markus Bernards	Media Relations Manager	+49 89 289 22562	<a href="mailto:bernards@zv.tum.de">bernards@zv.tum.de</a>