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Breast cancer study examines PSA marker

A study into a new screening technique for breast cancer using PSA (prostate specific antigen) as the biochemical marker has begun in the UK.

The Institute of Cancer Research two-year pilot study, to be led by Dr Ros Eeles, will recruit 100 women with a family history of breast cancer. The presence of PSA in nipple fluid was first noted in 1995 and, Dr Eeles told *Clinica*, now makes its full name unsuitable.

A similar study is underway in Canada at the University of Toronto, in conjunction with the Jefferson Cancer Center. Dr Eleftherlos Diamandis, of the university's clinical biochemistry department, said early results show raised levels of PSA indicate a reduced risk of cancer.

An earlier study to determine PSA's role in the prognosis of cancer showed that raised levels of PSA in tumours indicates a better life expectancy. PSA is present in 30% of breast tumours.

The UK researchers will take a sample of nipple fluid by placing a capillary tube over the nipple and squeezing it to express about five microlitres of nipple fluid. The fluid is then analysed using Diagnostic Products' random access analyser, Immulite. This was chosen because it has the highest sensitivity for low levels of test sample, the UK researchers said.

The UK study will also look at hormone levels and at which time of the menstrual cycle to collect the fluid for best results.