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[RESULTS OF REVIEW,Mark Quinn, CBC Morning Show, Dec.13.htm](#)

Hello again,

Attached is the coverage from last night's news casts and CBC Radio this morning. NTV interviewed Peter Dawe who didn't really support our efforts but he did say this test needed to be looked at nationally.



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Product Summary:

RESULTS OF REVIEW: Last year Eastern Health said it had discovered a problem with a test that it gives to breast cancer patients.

Wednesday, December 13, 2006 08:45AM Item # 14

CBC Radio St. John's

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JEFF GILHOOLY: Last year Eastern Health said it had discovered a problem with a test that it gives to breast cancer patients. It meant that some women weren't getting drugs that might save their lives. More than 900 tests dating back to 1997 had to be redone and now, almost 18 months later, the health authority is talking about some of the results of that review. CBC's Mark Quinn, of course, has been following the story. He joins me now. Good morning, Mark.

MARK QUINN: Good morning, Jeff.

JEFF GILHOOLY: I guess we got to go back to the beginning here. What kind of test are we talking about?

MARK QUINN: Well I think it's important to point out that the test was given to everyone who has breast cancer. So it's not a diagnostic test. It's a test that's used to determine what kind of treatment someone will get once they have breast cancer and it's called a hormone receptor test. If the test comes back positive, it means the tumour has receptors for hormones. So it's actually fed by hormones. The hormones promote its growth. So if you have a positive tumour, then you want to give someone drugs that actually block the hormones from getting to the tumour and feeding it and making it grow. So in this case, what happened was we heard that there was one case of a woman who had a test that they first thought it was positive; turned out it was negative.

JEFF GILHOOLY: So what was the problem with the hormone test at Eastern Health then?

MARK QUINN: Well, in the Spring of 2005, Eastern Health realized that it was getting the wrong results for some of these tests and with that one patient, where they realized they had the wrong result, they did more retesting to see if, in fact, it was a bigger problem than that one patient. Eastern Health then decided to retest all negative samples dating back to 1997. And now, after 18 months, the Eastern Health said that it still can't say exactly what went wrong. I spoke yesterday with Dr. Oscar Howell and he's the Vice President of Medical Services and Diagnostics for Eastern Health. Here's what he said.

DR. OSCAR HOWELL: What happened? There isn't any one event there that we've been able

to identify or any one person that made a mistake that we can say there it is, just go in there and fix that and this will be taken care of.

JEFF GILHOOLY: Mark, what are the results of the review that Eastern Health carried out?

MARK QUINN: Well, Eastern Health is only speaking publicly now about the results. Officials say they have to be very careful because, as you know as we reported in the past, they are facing possibly a class action suit of this matter. It hasn't been certified, but it's in the works. They're looking to have it certified. What they are saying now is that the results of this review of the treatment of these people is that 117 women have had their treatment changed. So they reviewed all the charts, after they got back the results, and these women are now probably receiving drugs like tamoxifen which, as I explained, blocks the hormones that block the growth of tumours.

JEFF GILHOOLY: So 117 women had their treatments changed. That's, what, more than 10% of the 939 samples that were retested? Do we know how many tests, in total, were wrong?

MARK QUINN: No, and Eastern Health just isn't saying that. All they're saying right now is 117 women have had their treatment changed. You know, it could be more than that because we know of at least one instance where a woman has died since her test was done and found to be incorrect. She's initiated a lawsuit over this and she's since died since she initiated that lawsuit. Her family is pursuing it. But, you know, we can think of one case that we know of in the courts. There may be many other women, who have died since 1997, who had their tests reinterpreted since then.

JEFF GILHOOLY: What reaction is this getting from the Canadian Cancer Society?

MARK QUINN: Its members say they still have questions. I spoke with Peter Dawe. He's the Executive Director of the Canadian Cancer Society in this province.

PETER DAWE: What we're not seeing still is a full explanation of the numbers of people that were affected overall and some idea of what actually went wrong with the process. Knowing how many people actually ended up with the different treatment, because of the issue, tells you about the impact of what that issue had on a number of people. I guess what it doesn't tell you about is the actual scope of what went wrong.

JEFF GILHOOLY: What's being done to improve the accuracy of hormone receptor tests done by Eastern Health?

MARK QUINN: Well the lab has designated a group of technicians who will now be responsible for all of these tests. So they've got a small group of people who will be specifically doing these tests. They'll be given additional training and lab technicians are now interpreting samples before they are sent to Mount Sinai and then checking to see if they're interpretations match what Mount Sinai is finding. As well, as a further measure, samples are being sent to a lab in Europe to see what they are finding and matching that against what's being found here in Mount Sinai. I spoke with Dr. Carol Lange yesterday and here's what she said about that.

DR. CAROL LANGE: I truly believe that we now have one of the best labs in this country in terms of doing this test. As a clinician, I have to be convinced that the lab is doing as good a job as they can for my patients; and I am.

JEFF GILHOOLY: Okay. Mark, where are the tests being done now?

MARK QUINN: Well the tests are still being done in Ontario in the Mount Sinai Hospital, but Eastern Health expects that the tests will be done here again, in Newfoundland, early next year.

JEFF GILHOOLY: Okay. Alright. That's CBCs Mark Quinn. Thanks.

MARK QUINN: Thank you.

-30-

ER/PR Coverage – December 12 2006**CBC TV**

Jonathan Crowe: Welcome back. Now, more on those false breast cancer screening tests. We're still not being told where testing went wrong between 1997 and 2005 or just how many errors were made on the samples sent for retesting. Chris O'Neil-Yates has our story.

Chris O'Neil-Yates: It all started here in this pathology lab at the Health Sciences Complex. Breast tumour tissue was tested to determine hormone levels, one indicator that is used to come up with treatment. But, in May 2005, the lab discovered that some of the tests were giving false results. Eastern Health still can't say what went wrong.

Dr. Oscar Howell: There's not one thing, along that process, that I could look at you and say we've identified that as the event or that person made an error. There is not one place along that where we have identified this.

Chris O'Neil-Yates: Once it realized the mistakes in 2005, Eastern Health sent about a thousand samples to be retested at a lab in Toronto. Eastern Health is now facing a lawsuit from dozens of women whose tests were mistaken, claiming false results denied them of treatment they ought to have received. The other side of the class action is women who got unnecessary treatment because of false results. Last summer, we introduced you to one of them, 59-year old Myrtle Lewis. Lewis claims a misdiagnosis resulted in her having a double mastectomy.

Myrtle Lewis: I'd look in the mirror in my bathroom and when I look at myself, I'd cry and I'd cry and I'd cry so it got to the point that I had to take the mirror down out of my bathroom.

Chris O'Neil-Yates: How much of a factor does the class action lawsuit have and what are you able to tell us?

Dr. Oscar Howell: The class action lawsuit, you know, is what it is. People have a right if they have a concern and feel wronged to enter the legal system and that will follow through. And certainly, it does change the rules somewhat on what you can talk about.

Dr. Kara Laing: In 117 people, we made some sort of recommendation to have their treatment changed.

Chris O'Neil-Yates: But there's one piece of information that still hasn't come out and that is how many of those one thousand tests were wrong?

Dr. Oscar Howell: Knowing what is positive and what is negative is really changing here and what's most important is that we make sure that those patients are getting the best treatment.

Chris O'Neil-Yates: The breast cancer screening tests will resume at this lab early in the new year. Eastern health says it's put every quality assurance measure in place to make sure that mistakes in testing are a thing of the past. Chris O'Neil-Yates, CBC News, St. John's.

NTV

Fred Hutton: Well Eastern Health continued to defend its record today after inaccurate test results led to incorrect treatment for 117 women in this province. Answers though today were met by even more questions. Here's NTV's Carolyn Stokes whose following the story for us.

Carolyn Stokes: Peter Dawe of the Canadian Cancer Society has a lot of unanswered questions for Eastern Health.

Peter Dawe: How many tests have we got wrong at the lab and the test results changed? How many people survived, how many people didn't survive out of this group?

Carolyn Stokes: Eastern Health has revealed that 117 breast cancer patients have received the wrong treatment due to an inaccuracies in the estrogen/progesterone tests conducted in this lab at the Health Sciences Centre.

Dr. Oscar Howell: We have been a forthright with people as we can be. Every patient that we have identified, we have talked to the patient, talked to their family.

Carolyn Stokes: Eastern Health sent over 900 breast cancer samples to Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital for retesting but samples from some patients were excluded from the process.

Dr. Kara Laing: If we, through the process of doing things, knew that somebody was deceased, we did not retest their sample. It was something we thought long and hard about. If we felt that whether these patients could have been estrogen receptor positive or negative would impact on the risk to the other family members of breast cancer then it would be important to do, but it doesn't.

Peter Dawe: That makes a lot of sense when you're trying to run a cancer treatment system. This is added on work so you've got limited resources and you're trying to get at the people you can help but,

again, for the general public and groups like the Cancer Society, we want a complete understanding of who was affected and whether the people passed away or not.

- Carolyn Stokes: Because of the complicated nature of the ER/PR test, Eastern Health doesn't know exactly what went wrong but they're conducting an external quality review to ensure accuracy is increased in the future.
- Dr. Kara Laing: This was something that was taken very seriously by Eastern Health and by all of us. And, I could look at them and say, you know this has happened and we don't really know why but we made this decision to retest everybody because we thought if we could help you in some way that we should do that and I think that the good that will come out of this is that our lab will be, and I think it's on its way to being, one of the best labs in the country to do this test.
- Carolyn Stokes: But for the Canadian Cancer Society, concerns about inaccurate testing extend beyond this lab. They expect to find a trend across the country.
- Peter Dawe: This has to be looked at across the country, wherever this test is being done to ensure that there's consistency and accuracy to whatever degree we can get it to much like you'd see anywhere else in the world.
- Carolyn Stokes: Eastern Health is now facing a class action lawsuit which they say is limiting the amount of information that can be released. Carolyn Stokes, NTV News.