

# Men miss out because doctors treat them like women

Chris Smyth

Men with breast cancer are missing out on the best therapies because they are treated like women even though their cancers are markedly different.

About 400 British men a year develop breast cancer. A study led by Carolien van Deurzen, of the Erasmus Medical Centre, Rotterdam, looked at samples from 1,500 men and found that

tumour grade, a measure commonly used to classify female cancers, was not a good predictor of how well men would do. Instead a measure of fibrotic tissue and a type of white blood cells was a much better indicator for men.

Professor Fatima Cardoso, chairwoman of the European Breast Cancer Conference in Amsterdam, at which the research was presented, said: "This is the first step to understanding that

there are biological differences and therefore there must be therapeutic implications."

Baroness Morgan of Drefelin, chief executive of Breast Cancer Now, said that the study "could change how decisions about the necessity of chemotherapy for certain male patients are made". She said: "Unfortunately the findings highlight the possible futility of using a current treatment planning

tool for men, showing that grade — a marker of how different the cancer cells are from normal cells — was not linked to overall outcomes in male breast cancer in the same way that it is for women. If these results are confirmed, doctors may no longer be able to use grading to guide chemotherapy treatment decisions in certain cases of male breast cancer and will now need to rely on other tests alone."

Times 11 March 2016