

ASL Cancer Genetics

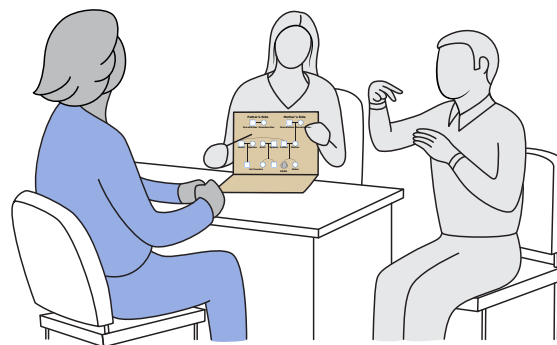
Module 4 Video

English Transcript

Anna reviewed her family history. She thinks her cancer risk is higher than most people. What should she do? She will meet with a genetic counselor to find out if her family has a gene mutation.

Genetic counselors are health care professionals. They are trained to educate and counsel people about genetics and genetic testing. They also help people cope with the emotional impact of diseases.

Here we see Anna sitting with a genetic counselor. They are reviewing her family tree and identifying risks. They will also discuss how cancer may run in the family and affect other family members. Most genetic counselors do not know American Sign Language. But, an interpreter can be present.



In this module we discuss what happens when you meet with a genetic counselor.

Personal risk assessment

The genetic counselor and Anna talked about Anna's family and medical history. They looked at Anna's family tree to identify risk factors for inherited cancer.

The counselor determined that Anna might have inherited a genetic predisposition for breast and ovarian cancer. They discussed a plan for what to do next. They considered whether Anna might have gene mutation, if she could benefit from genetic testing, and how she can reduce her cancer risk.

Genetic testing process

The genetic counselor explained that a genetic test sometimes identifies if a person has inherited a gene mutation for cancer. This can be done with a blood test or cheek swab.

Genetic testing and cancer screening are not the same thing. A genetic test can see if a person has a gene mutation. Cancer screening can see if a person has cancer.

What the genetic counselor recommends will depend on family history. If there is a cancer risk, genetic testing may be suggested. Not everyone will be recommended for genetic testing.

Anna's family history has some risk factors. The genetic counselor recommends she get tested.

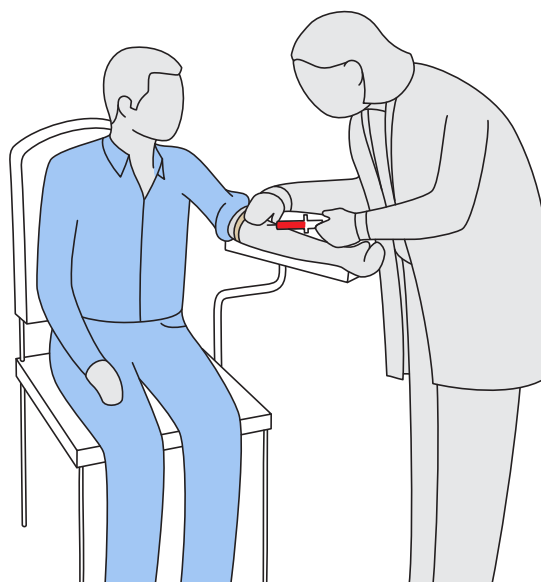
Cancer genetic testing is not easy. It is a complicated process. **The best way to get information about Anna's risk for developing cancer is to have a relative with cancer get a genetic test first.**

Anna's male cousin with breast cancer agreed to be tested. The test results showed that he has a gene mutation. Because of this, the genetic counselor recommended that Anna get tested too.

The genetic counselor helped Anna arrange all of this. Keep in mind that it can take a few weeks or months to get the results.

Genetic test results

Anna learned that her male cousin has a breast cancer gene mutation. Now Anna will get tested to see if she inherited it from her father's side of the family.



Anna was tested. The genetic counselor informed Anna that she does have the gene mutation. Does this mean Anna has cancer? No. It means that her risk for breast or ovarian cancer is higher than most people.

Some people in Anna's family do not have the cancer mutation. They may be relieved and think they have no cancer risk. This is not so. They can still get cancer. But their risk is now the same as most people.

Emotional support process

Now we know that Anna has a gene mutation for breast and ovarian cancer. The genetic counselor offers Anna support and suggestions on how to share this information with her family. This is especially important for Anna's sister because she has a 50/50 chance of inheriting the mutation from her father.

Reducing cancer risk

There are different ways to reduce cancer risk. We know Anna has a gene mutation. She can go to a doctor who specializes in cancer, an oncologist. They can discuss her options. One option that Anna may choose is breast cancer screening. Compared to most women Anna may have her screenings more often and begin her screening at a younger age.

Identify resources

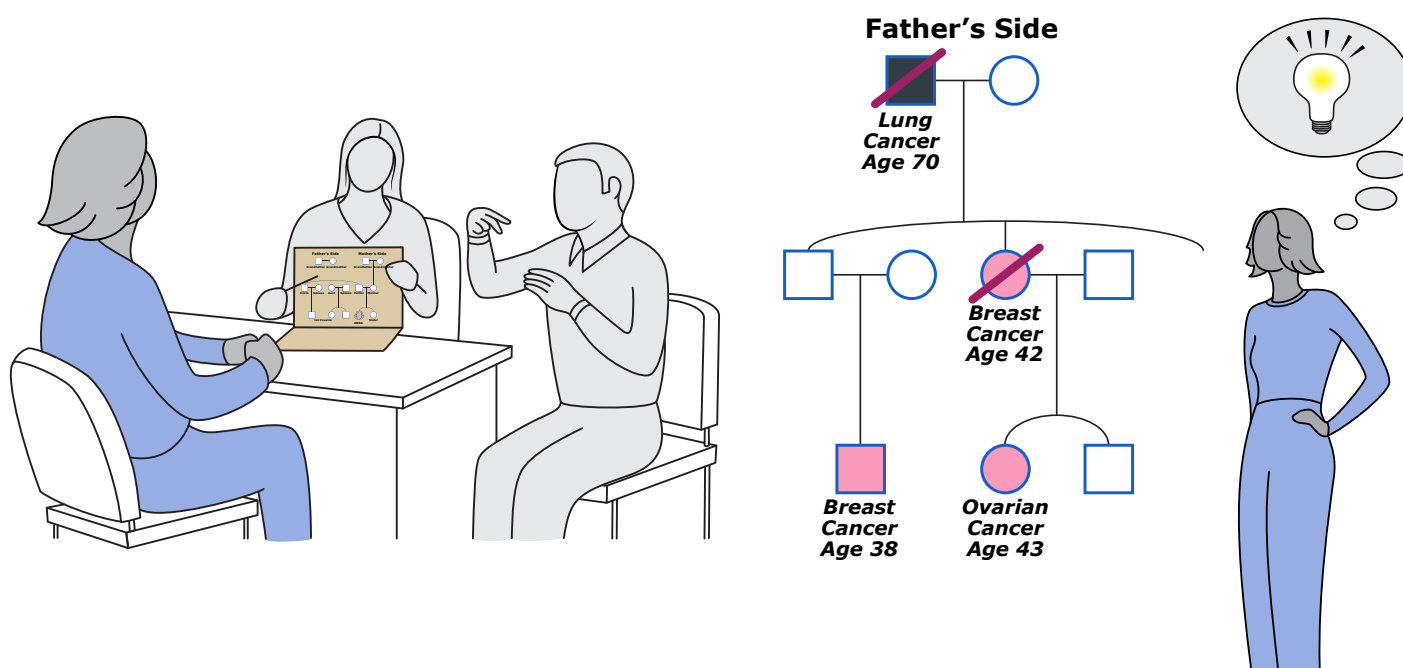
The genetic counselor helps Anna find resources. This includes support groups that she can attend and information on the Internet. Knowing about these options can help Anna decide how she wants to reduce her risk.

Processing information

Genetic information can be new and overwhelming. It may take a few months or even a year to feel ready to take the step to be tested. That is fine. Your experiences with genetic testing may prevent you from wanting to get this information. Before deciding to be tested Anna took the important step of meeting with a genetic counselor. This is a step that everyone should take before deciding on genetic testing.

Shared decision making

When Anna met with the genetic counselor they discussed the challenges and benefits of genetic testing.



What are some of these challenges?

1. Anna may not learn why cancer is common in her family. There may be no answer.
2. If Anna and her family find out they have a genetic predisposition for cancer, they may become depressed or worried.
3. If Anna's father has a genetic predisposition for cancer, he may feel guilty about
4. passing it to his children.

Information can benefit Anna.

1. She can learn how to reduce her risk.
2. If she does get cancer she will know what treatment options are available.
3. Now that Anna knows about her family's risk for inherited cancer, she can share this with them.

The genetic counselor helped Anna with the testing process. She did not make decisions for Anna. She empowered Anna to make her own decisions. Why? Because the person who will be affected the most is Anna. Her life is important.