



Connection found between breast implants and rare kind of lymphoma

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REED CITY — While extremely uncommon and not fully understood, doctors and scientists believe there is a connection between textured breast implants and lymphoma.

Dr. Anas Al-Janadi, department chief of oncology at Spectrum Health Reed City Hospital, said they started to hear about these cases around five years ago.

According to the medical literature, there have been 573 unique instances worldwide of people developing anaplastic large cell lymphoma as a result of breast implants. In 33 of these cases, the patients died; in 481 cases, the implant was a specific product called BIOCELL, which is sold by Allergan, who voluntarily recalled the

implants in July.

Since the data is limited at this point, Al-Janadi said it is uncertain whether the lymphoma was directly caused by the implants.

"We have not seen a very good study done yet," Al-Janadi said, adding that more information is needed to narrow down with more precision the factors that may contribute to someone developing lymphoma from breast implants.

For instance, scientists want to find out if other factors — such as pre-existing medical conditions — could be contributing to the development of lymphoma in patients.

Al-Janadi said there are a number of differences between this type of lymphoma and breast cancer: For one thing, breast cancer is the result of cell

mutation in the breast; it is often genetic, meaning there is little a person can do to prevent it from developing.

In these cases of anaplastic large cell lymphoma — which is a rare type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma — Al-Janadi said the cause is believed to be related to chronic tissue inflammation in the breast caused by the insertion of a foreign object — the breast implant.

"It seems to be the difference between something you can control, and something you can't control," Al-Janadi said.

Current research indicates that people with breast implants are 15 to 18 times more likely to develop this type of lymphoma than those without implants.

Al-Janadi said he's seen several cases of anaplastic

large cell lymphoma at Spectrum Reed City Hospital but none of the cases have been tied to breast implants.

Anyone considering a breast implant surgery should take recent findings into consideration before making a decision, Al-Janadi said.

For those who already have implants, Al-Janadi advises to keep a close eye on them but based on how seldom lymphoma develops, there is no reason to panic.

"Although it's a multiple of a low number, it's still a low number," Al-Janadi said vis-à-vis the total number of cases and chance someone could develop lymphoma from breast implants. "Everyone is thinking they're going to be that case."

Another reason not to get too scared is the responsiveness of this type of lymphoma to treatment.



Top, International health authorities now recognize that implants with roughened surfaces both gel-filled and saline-filled can cause a very rare lymphoma, a type of immune system cancer. Above, Dr. Anas Al-Janadi

Al-Janadi said treatment in these cases tends to be less extensive than it would be for breast cancer, although surgical removal of the implant is necessary, followed usually by some form of radiation or chemotherapy, or both.

It is Al-Janadi's hope that more attention will be brought to this phenomenon so more evidence can be gathered and they can better understand how the connection between lymphoma and implant is formed.

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