

Tests are best for breasts

DOREEN PREMDEV

SHOCKING statistics have revealed that not only is breast cancer becoming an epidemic among Indian women, but the life threatening disease has become common among men, as well.

Research carried out by a leading Durban histo/cyto-pathologist, Dr Anil Bramdev, has also revealed that, whereas previously the high-risk age was from 45 to 60, women as young as 21 were now at risk of contracting breast cancer.

Bramdev said breast cancer in men was "more aggressive" than female breast cancer because men had little adipose tissue (fat) in comparison and the cancer was able to spread faster.

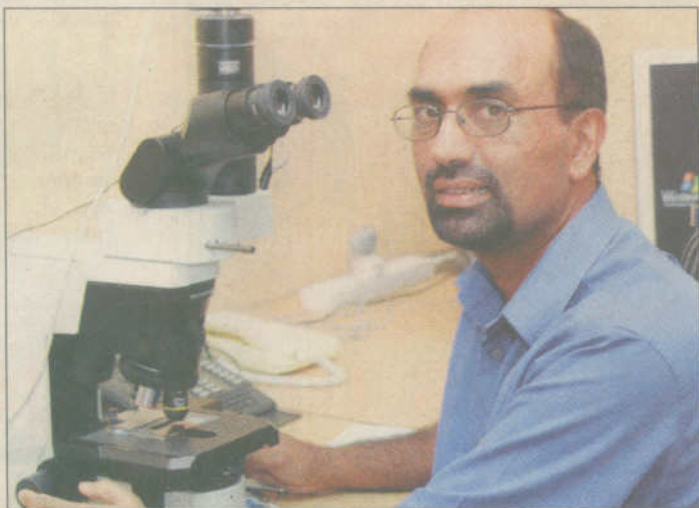
Bramdev compiled the research for the National Pathology Group, South Africa's umbrella body for pathologists.

"(On average), we have two new Indian breast cancer patients a day, whereas, in the past we did not see as many Indian patients," Bramdev said.

"However, it is possible that the higher rate of breast cancer in the Indian community has been revealed because more women are coming for treatment.

"Most Indian woman are conservative and shy away from breast examinations, but the seriousness of breast cancer is making women and men more aware of the urgency for early diagnosis."

Bramdev said it was vitally



DR ANIL Bramdev, a histo-cyto pathologist, has researched breast cancer and found that Indian woman are more prone to breast cancer
Picture: KHAYA NGWENYA

important to get a medical examination immediately if any irregularities were noticed.

"Once doctors can establish whether a patient is at risk of hereditary breast cancer, the treatment process can begin," Bramdev said.

"Doctors have identified two types of breast cancer genes, Braca 1 and Braca 2. It is advisable for women who have had a history of breast cancer in their families to get examined, because there is an 85% chance that these women may get breast cancer, too. Proper counselling and regular medical examinations can prevent cancer from getting worse.

Patients with advanced breast cancer still had hope of a

possible cure, Bramdev said, and a C Erb test could limit the spread of the cancer.

"Some cancers produce C Erb receptors - (these cells are) identified when a test is conducted on a tissue sample of a cancer patient," Bramdev said.

"A new drug, Herceptin, which is now available in South Africa, can block these C Erb receptors and limit the spread of cancer.

"The causes of cancer and the reason it is common among Indians is still being researched. But every day, breakthroughs are being made in the medical world and we are starting to understand and find ways to control cancer," Bramdev said.