

Breast Cancer Awareness

Kristin Parsley searches for genetic disposition to cancer

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One teaspoon of blood can make the difference in the early detection of cancer or a genetic disposition toward it.

The field of using genetics to find a familial connection to cancer has changed in the past few years, according to the medical director of Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare's Clinical Genetics Center, Kristin Parsley.

Not all cancers stem from the same thing, Parsley said, but new technology, Next-Generation sequencing, can point physicians toward a predisposition for it.

"So what we are able to do now is we are able to create panels for patients based on their personal and family his-



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Kristin Parsley is medical director of Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare's Clinical Genetics Center.

tory to look at all the cancer syndrome genes that would be applicable," she said.

Of the more than 300,000 cases of breast cancer reported in the U.S. last year, 5 to 10 percent of them were



Tallahassee Memorial Cancer Center

hereditary, 20 percent could be attributed to environmental factors and gene mutations not yet known to medicine and 70 percent are sporadic.

Parsley said patterns in age and type of cancer can help patients, along with their doctors, make decisions.

Generally, the earlier it's discovered — under age 50 — the more closely linked to genetics, the more closely it's monitored and the sooner it can be addressed with greater patient comfort.

"Physicians and pa-

tients need to be able to know what to look for," Parsley said. "If your physician has a family at-risk tool kit, fill it out and see if you're at risk, and make sure that it's the correct guidelines, so that you can catch things early."

