A 2011 study finds that a genetic test appears effective for helping identify women with the earliest form of breast cancer, known as ductal carcinoma in situ, or DCIS. The test, known as Oncotype DX, can help doctors determine which patients are least likely to suffer a recurrence, and tailor the treatment to the specific needs of the patient. The study's findings were reported at the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium.

Keywords
Breast, Cancer, Tumor, Treatment, Diagnosis, Precancerous, Precursor, Condition, Mammogram, DCIS, Ductal Carcinoma In Situ, Milk Ducts, Ductal, Carcinoma, Skin, Tissue, Invasive, Non Invasive, Radiation, Mastectomy, Genetic, Diagnostic, Test, Oncotype DX, Risk, Factors, Markers, Guidance, Genomic Health
Transcript
Genetic Test Can Help Tailor Breast Cancer Treatment

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
Over 200,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer every year in this country alone. But as you and
your family may know all too well, another 50,000 get a diagnosis that is less clear when they're told they
have a, quote, "precancerous condition." There are new findings tonight that could help clear up some of
the confusion and help people make more informed decisions about their health care. Our report tonight
from our chief science correspondent, Robert Bazell.

ROBERT BAZELL, reporting:
After a mammogram, Dorothy Warren learned she had something called DCIS, almost breast cancer but
not quite the same.

DOROTHY WARREN: You're going to tell me I have cancer and I have stage zero, and it's not real
invasive cancer? I was not only fearful, I was confused.

Dr. PAMELA OTTO (University of Texas, San Antonio): What some people call a precursor to cancer.

BAZELL: Dr. Pamela Otto, a breast radiologist, says DCIS consists of cancer cells that are inside the milk
ducts.

Dr. OTTO: We take out a little bit of that tissue.

BAZELL: Doctors cannot be sure it will spread or if the patient needs to be treated with radiation or a
mastectomy.

Dr. OTTO: There's a percentage that will never go on to develop an invasive cancer, but a certain
percentage will go on to develop an invasive cancer.

BAZELL: Today's study, presented at a major breast cancer conference, finds that a genetic test called
Oncotype DX can help with decisions about how to treat these cases. It gives a score indicating how high the risk is. Good news for women?

Dr. KATHY MILLER (Indiana University): It's really huge news for women. It allows us to begin to make individualized treatment decisions.

BAZELL: The results are part of a big movement to use genetic markers to tailor treatment so that every cancer patient gets the best possible care. Experts say only about one quarter of DCIS patients need radiation.

Dr. WILLIAM WOOD (Emory University School of Medicine): Now we can look and say, `What is your specific risk? Are you in the three-quarters who have a very low risk?'

BAZELL: Sometimes this will just stay in a woman's ducts for the rest of her life and she'll never have a life-threatening disease, right?

Dr. OTTO: That's correct.

BAZELL: A test that could provide useful guidance for tens of thousands of women every year. Robert Bazell, NBC News, San Antonio.