

# New study reveals pathologist disagreement in breast cancer diagnoses

*A new study revealed that many breast cancer cases, particularly those with a challenging biopsy, are misdiagnosed.*

Every year, according to Time Magazine, approximately 1.6 women have a breast biopsy done. In some situations, the existence of [breast cancer](#) after a biopsy is performed is obvious. However in others, the results are uncertain and the woman can be misdiagnosed. According to a recent study published in the journal JAMA, researchers discovered that pathologists and outside specialists could only agree on the results of a challenging breast biopsy approximately 75 percent of the time.

## How the study was conducted

Researchers had 115 pathologists in the U.S. look at 240 breast cancer biopsy slides and then had them make a diagnosis for each case. After their decisions were made, they were compared to the correct diagnoses that were determined by three industry experts. The independent pathologists agreed on a particular diagnosis 75.3 percent of the time, nearly identical to the percentage of agreed diagnoses between the 3 expert pathologists.

While the pathologists and specialists agreed on a diagnosis for invasive cancers 96 percent of the time, 4 percent of these cancers were still misdiagnosed. Additionally, in more challenging biopsy cases, like those cases involving atypia, a condition that occurs when abnormal, non-cancerous cells are present, the pathologists missed the diagnosis at a rate of 62 percent.

This study did not analyze how incorrect breast cancer diagnoses could impact patients. However, these findings raise concerns about whether breast cancer is being over-diagnosed and over-treated.

## Misdiagnosis occurs often for other cancers

While this study revealed that breast cancer can be routinely misdiagnosed, many other types of cancers and illnesses are misdiagnosed frequently as well. According to The Washington Post, 10 to 20 percent of the time, the diagnosis of cancer or another illness is incorrect, delayed or completely missed altogether. Although prevalent, this form of [negligent healthcare](#)

receives much less attention than medication errors and wrong-site surgeries.

The misdiagnosis of cancer or other illnesses can result in serious consequences for patients. According to a report released in 2009 that was funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, for every 583 diagnostic mistakes reported anonymously by healthcare professionals, 28 percent resulted in death, permanent disability or a life-threatening situation.

### **Consult with an attorney**

When a misdiagnosis occurs, patients in Arizona may require additional medical care and suffer from physical and emotional consequences. If you were misdiagnosed by a healthcare professional, speak with an attorney at the Law Offices of Raymond J. Slomski, P.C. to determine what legal steps you should take next.

Keywords: misdiagnosis, healthcare, negligence