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Sanford Barsky, M.D. has an eight-page article on IBC in the publication, *Oncologic Magazine*, Third Quarter 2006 edition, pages 26-33. The article is titled **Few Survivors, Fewer Baby Boomer Advocates**. "Inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) is a form of human breast cancer that, unfortunately, has not benefited from the recent advances that have aided the Baby Boomer generation afflicted with the more common forms of breast cancer." The magazine, 6.25 MB, can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

**Inflammatory Breast Cancer Clinic Opens**

**World's First Program Dedicated to Treatment, Research of IBC, October 2006**

HOUSTON, TX - M.D. Anderson features an article in their December 2006 issue of *CancerWise* that begins *Imagine being diagnosed with a fast-growing, lethal cancer so rare and baffling that researchers have little information on how to treat it. That has been the case for women diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer (IBC), a disease in which only 40% of patients in the United States survive five years. Scientists hope to improve those statistics with the opening of M. D. Anderson's Inflammatory Breast Cancer Clinic and Research Program, the world's first clinic devoted solely to research, diagnosis and treatment of IBC.* [Click here to read the article](#). The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center announced October 20, 2006 the first clinic in the world dedicated to the treatment and research of inflammatory breast cancer (IBC). [Press Release](#) Read the remarks of Owen Johnson, President of the IBC Research Foundation, at the IBC Clinic opening by [clicking here](#).

**What is Inflammatory Breast Cancer?** INFLAMMATORY BREAST CANCER (IBC) is an advanced and accelerated form of breast cancer usually not detected by mammograms or ultrasounds. Inflammatory breast cancer requires immediate aggressive treatment with chemotherapy prior to surgery and is treated differently than more common types of breast cancer. **"African Americans have a higher incidence of IBC than do Caucasians and other ethnic groups (10.1%, 6.2%, and 5.1%, respectively)."** [source](#)

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[There is more than one kind of breast cancer.](#)

We have been taught and are reminded frequently by public service announcements and by the medical community that when a woman discovers a lump on her breast she should go to the doctor immediately. Inflammatory breast cancer usually grows in nests or sheets, rather than as a confined, solid tumor and therefore can be diffuse throughout the breast with no palpable mass. The cancer cells clog the lymphatic system just below the skin. Lymph node involvement is assumed. Increased breast density compared to prior mammograms should be considered suspicious.

[You Don't Have to Have a Lump to Have Breast Cancer.](#)

Some women who have inflammatory breast cancer may remain undiagnosed for long periods, even while seeing their doctor to learn the cause of her symptoms. The symptoms are similar to mastitis, a breast infection and some doctors, not recognizing IBC, will prescribe antibiotics. If a response to antibiotics is not apparent after a week, a biopsy should be performed or a referral to a breast specialist is warranted.

**Age 52: Median age at time of diagnosis of IBC ... versus, Age 62: Median age at time of diagnosis of Breast Cancer.**

A surprising portion of young women with IBC had their first symptoms during pregnancy or lactation. The misconception that these young women are at lower risk for breast cancer and the fact that IBC is the most aggressive form of breast cancer may result in metastases when the diagnosis is made.

[One or more of the following are Typical Symptoms of IBC:](#)

- Swelling, usually sudden, sometimes a cup size in a few days
- Itching

- Pink, red, or dark colored area (*called erythema*) sometimes with texture similar to the skin of an orange (*called peau d'orange*)
- Ridges and thickened areas of the skin
- What appears to be a bruise that does not go away
- Nipple retraction
- Nipple discharge, may or may not be bloody
- Breast is warm to the touch
- Breast pain (*from a constant ache to stabbing pains*)
- Change in color and texture of the areola

**These Symptoms May Be Present in Benign Breast Disorders. See your doctor if you have any of these symptoms.**

Inflammatory Breast Cancer is typically abbreviated as IBC. Non-inflammatory breast cancer may include in its diagnosis the terms "in situ breast cancer," "infiltrating breast cancer," or "invasive breast cancer" all of which may be abbreviated with "ibc," but those terms alone do not specify inflammatory breast cancer. To add to the possible confusion, the diagnosis may include more than one kind of breast cancer; for example "inflammatory breast cancer, invasive ductal carcinoma, and mucinous carcinoma" all in the same breast. So if a person you know has been described as having IBC or ibc, it may be well to ask what that is abbreviating, since it may not be "inflammatory breast cancer" and therefore the symptoms and other information presented here may not apply.

[View pictures](#) showing common presentation of some of these symptoms.

[Read what patients write](#) about their own symptoms prior to diagnosis.

[View videos](#) about IBC.

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### Is inflammatory breast cancer the same disease in each person diagnosed?

Researchers and clinicians don't know the answer to that question but hypothesize that there are "types," "sub-types," or "categories" of IBC. Typically, the sub-types hypothesized are divided by presentation at time of diagnosis: 1) clinical symptoms only, with no pathological confirmation finding tumor emboli (tightly packed clumps of tumor cells, like a bunch of grapes but very tightly packed together) in the dermal lymphatics of the affected breast; 2) pathological only, finding tumor emboli in the dermal lymphatics, without presentation of clinical symptoms; and 3) clinical and pathological.

Another way to categorize IBC is by age and gender at time of diagnosis:

1. There is documented evidence of two cases in girls as young as [12-years-old](#), one of whom had not begun menstruation.
2. There are several documented cases of male IBC.
3. There are cases diagnosed during pregnancy or lactation.
4. And there are cases that don't fall into any of the first three categories, but are diagnosed in each of three menopausal periods of life: premenopausal, perimenopausal, and postmenopausal.

Beyond those categories, there are IBC cases that have special circumstances:

1. 3 cases diagnosed in 10 months amongst 24 co-workers
2. more than one case in the same family: mother-daughter, sisters, and 1st degree cousins
3. IBC diagnosed in a breast with an implant
4. IBC diagnosed post-hysterectomy, in some cases including oophorectomy

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### Strange things doctors have told IBC patients about their symptoms prior to their diagnosis with IBC:

1. The doctor said that if it was breast cancer he would be able to find a lump and not just inflammation and swollen nodes, with a discharge and calcifications in the breast tissue due to caffeine (*which she doesn't drink*.)
2. The doctor said she had spider bites when she developed skin metastasis following treatment for regular breast cancer.
3. After her mammogram the radiologist told her to stop wearing under wire bras.
4. She was told to change bras and detergent to get rid of the rash.
5. My sister was told that her blue colored bruise was a fatty necrosis and no way was it cancer.
6. At age 20 she was told the lump she felt was "rib cartilage" and not to worry as she was too young to have breast cancer. She wasn't properly diagnosed until 2 years and 3 exams later. She died of IBC at age 25.

7. She was told she had regular breast cancer instead of IBC. The doctor said he had seen plenty of IBC cases and she didn't have it. (*She did have IBC. The clinical presentation of inflammatory breast cancer may vary from patient to patient.*)
8. She had inflammation with intense itching on one breast which appeared and disappeared 4 times. The first time it was diagnosed as spider bites; the second time as an allergic reaction to food or detergent, and irritation from cyst fluid from fibrocystic breast the 3rd time. The 4th time, she was diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer. *Note: spider bites or insect bites do not cause inflammatory breast cancer. Seek medical attention if a small red spot having the appearance of an insect bite does not soon resolve.*
9. Her IBC was first diagnosed as shingles.
10. Finally, although this woman had not been diagnosed with IBC when she wrote this, it does not change the fact that **her doctor's explanation of how IBC starts is erroneous**. She was told she didn't need a biopsy because IBC "starts with a lump which then disperses and she couldn't have IBC because the lump would have shown up on one of her previous mammograms."

If you have been diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer, and would like to share something strange you were told about your symptoms by a doctor **prior to your diagnosis**, [please write to us](#). Your message will be treated confidentially.

**Be your own best advocate to have symptoms diagnosed to know the cause.**

Below are three examples written by newly diagnosed IBC patients that wish to remain anonymous.

*I would like to thank you for this web site. This web site has helped me. I was having problems and the doctors was treating me for mastitis with medicine and it wasn't working. My ultra sound and mammogram said that it was mastitis. I told the surgeon he had to do a biopsy, because I thought that I had IBC. He said he thought I needed another week of medicine and I said no, get me scheduled for surgery next week. Two weeks later they told me that I have IBC. I found your information helpful. Thank you for giving the information to fight this. I am hoping and praying that I get to raise my 2 year old son. I have started the road to fight this and beat it.*

*When I first experienced pain in my breast, I made an appointment with my internist and my OB/GYN. I found comfort when after both examinations, both doctors separately told me: "The good news is that cancer doesn't hurt". I held on to those words for five months before the pain and breast became worse and I was diagnosed with IBC.*

*I am 53 yrs. old. I was diagnosed with IBC in Jan. 2003. I first noticed something wrong with my left arm. It hurt and I couldn't raise it as high as usual. I went to the Dr. at a clinic and they started by treating me for Mastitis. They did this for almost a year. I kept telling them something was very wrong. Then my breast started to hurt on the left side. I went to urgent care and the Dr. there said I had cancer and needed to see a surgeon. By then my nipple was inverted. I finally got to see a breast surgeon. He had given me some needle biopsies. They came back negative. I told them something was still wrong. They told me to put warm wash cloths on my nipple for 10 minutes twice a day. That was the strange part. Well that didn't help and finally on the 24th of Jan. I was given a biopsy during surgery and was told on Jan. 31st of 2004 I had cancer. I had to be very persistent and almost aggressive to find out the truth. Then I told them I wanted a second Dr. to tell me the same thing since it took them so long.*

*The words "signs" and "symptoms" have different medical meanings. Symptoms are those problems that a patient notices or feels. Signs are those things that a physician can objectively detect or measure. For instance, a patient will feel hot, this is a symptom. The physician will touch the patient's skin and note that it is warm and moist; this is a sign.*

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The Inflammatory Breast Cancer Research Foundation is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the support of research and public awareness. 100% of all [donations](#) go directly to support the [mission and goals](#) of the Foundation. The Foundation has no corporate sponsors and receives no grants; we rely solely on many small, tax-deductible voluntary donations to pursue our commitment to finding the causes of IBC. Please call 1-877-stop-ibc (1-877-786-7422) toll free in the United States and Canada to leave a message to speak to one of our volunteers, or [contact us](#) by e-mail.



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