

Introduction

In this inaugural issue of *Breast Disease*, we have focused on one of the most important genes involved in the genesis of breast and ovarian cancer, BRCA1. More than any other example, the history of BRCA1 shows how modern science can quickly resolve a complex question, and how our society is capable of addressing the social ramifications of these findings. In this context, BRCA1 becomes an intriguing case study of the impact of modern science on the conduct of clinical care, on

ethics, and on the law. We have assembled timely reviews by superb authors who discuss all aspects of the BRCA1 story: the biology, the clinical impact, the population genetics, and the social and legal implications. Thus, the scope of these reviews matches the breadth of the problem. Our hope is that this sweep of the field will facilitate the synthesis of new ideas.

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