

Clomifene and menotropins – no increased risk of breast or ovarian cancer

Use of the fertility drugs clomifene and menotropins is not associated with an increased risk of breast and ovarian cancer, according to a study conducted in Israel.

The prospective cohort study included 1197 infertile women who attended a fertility clinic from 1960–1984. 780 women received fertility drugs and 417 patients received no fertility drugs (unexposed). 603 patients received 2187 treatment cycles of clomifene alone; 161 patients received 1211 treatment cycles of clomifene, followed by 531 cycles of menotropins, and 16 patients received 49 cycles of menotropins alone. Patients were followed up for a mean of 17.9 years.

Overall, 38 cancers were identified (breast, ovary, uterine body, cervix and other sites); there was no increased incidence among the drug-exposed or drug-unexposed groups compared with the expected incidence of these cancers in the general population. 16 patients who were exposed to the fertility agents developed breast cancer, this increased incidence was nonsignificant compared with the general population (standardised incidence ratio 1.65; 95% CI 0.94–2.68). Two cases of ovarian cancer were observed, 1 patient was in the drug-exposed group and 1 patient in the unexposed group.

No malignancies were observed among patients treated with menotropins alone. However, compared with the general population, patients who received \leq 1000mg of clomifene had a statistically significant increased standardised ratio for all gynaecological cancers (2.28; 95% CI 1.18–3.98) and breast cancers (2.52; 1.21–4.64).