

## Precautionary measures: the need for evidence-based guidelines

For decades of clinical practice, providers have instructed patients undergoing breast cancer surgery to minimize the risk of developing breast cancer-related lymphedema (BCRL) by avoiding blood pressure measurements, infusions, injections in and on the at-risk arm; using compression sleeves during air travel; and avoiding temperature extremes. These recommendations evolved from an abundance of caution given limited knowledge of BCRL, but not from sound clinical proof. Given the BCRL-risk is lifelong and patients are fearful of its development, patients report strict adherence to these guidelines. However, there are situations wherein adherence to these guidelines is burdensome for patients. Over the past decade, evidence has been evolving regarding precautionary measures. The Lymphedema Research Program at Massachusetts General Hospital has systematically approached precautionary measures research through literature review, data collection, and the generation and publication of evidence. This research has impacted clinical practice and current guidelines. Research to date and the current state of precautionary measures will be objectively summarized and recommendations for future work in this area will be made. The goals of establishing evidence-based guidelines are to ensure that practitioners can best guide patients as to their individual risk, helping patients to make safe decisions whilst minimizing risk of BCRL and maximizing quality of life. An open dialogue is encouraged to help forward this work.