Re: Dormancy of Mammary Carcinoma After Mastectomy

The article by Karrison et al. (1) argues incorrectly that the long, latent period before the recurrence of breast cancer after mastectomy is due to dormant cells. An alternate and better documented explanation is the extreme variation in the actual tumor volume doubling time. How the variation in actual growth rates affects the extremes of disease duration has been well documented in previous publications and has been reviewed recently (2–5).

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REFERENCES


NOTE

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RESPONSE

In their 1996 essay, Spratt et al. concluded that the growth of breast cancer can be characterized by “a decelerating curve with great natural variance.” This description is probably not of great use clinically, although it was carefully established and it may enhance biologic understanding of this disease. In any case, while we agree that variations in tumor doubling times, rather than late induction of tumor growth, could explain some of the long latency periods observed in our study, we believe it is uncertain whether this variation would account for the majority of late recurrences.

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