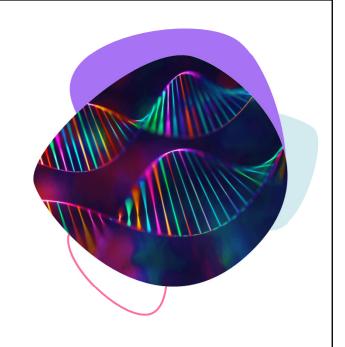
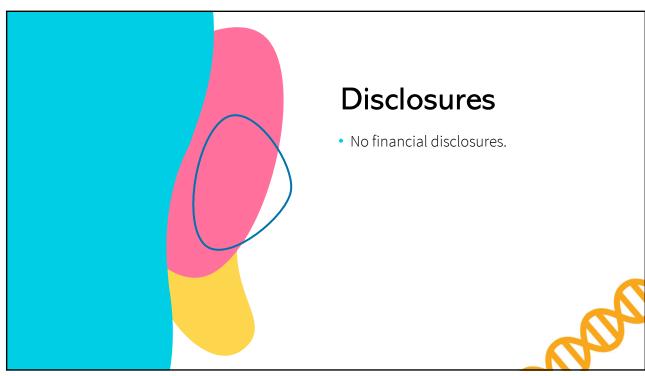
Somatic vs. Germline Mutations

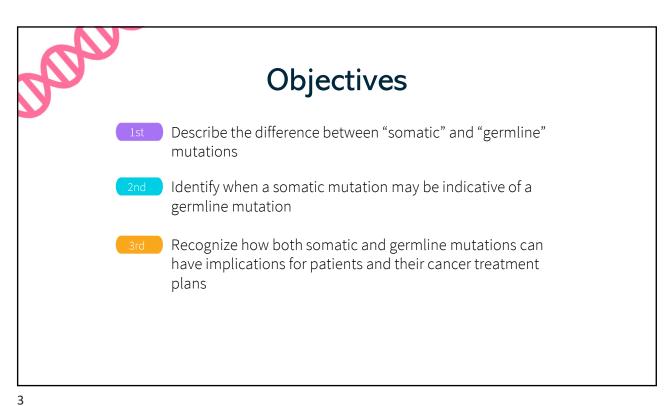
Their Differences and Importance in Cancer Care

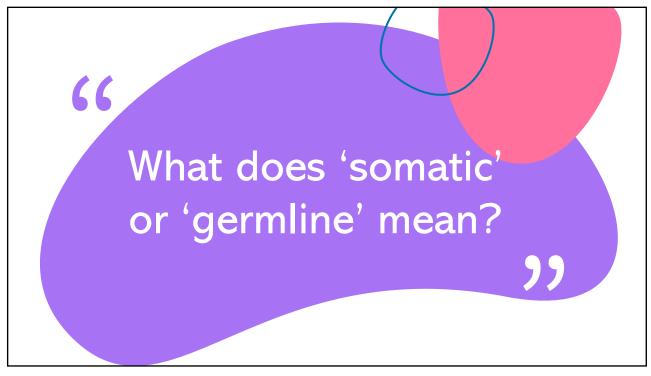
Jessie Poskochil, MGC, CGC (she/her) Licensed and Certified Genetic Counselor University of Nebraska Medical Center



1







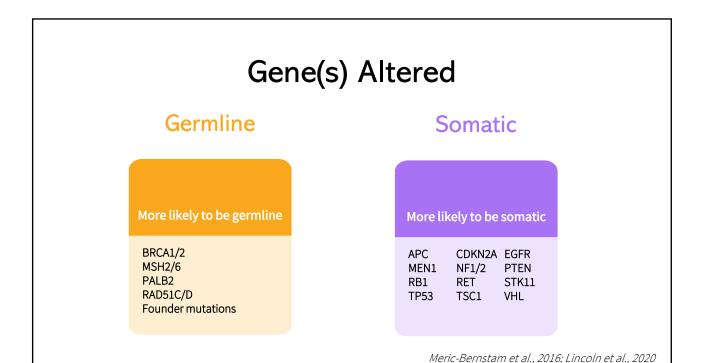
Germline: DNA that represents the DNA you are born with, in all your cells, that can be passed down offspring Somatic: DNA that represents the tumor's DNA, often acquired changes, not passed down to offspring

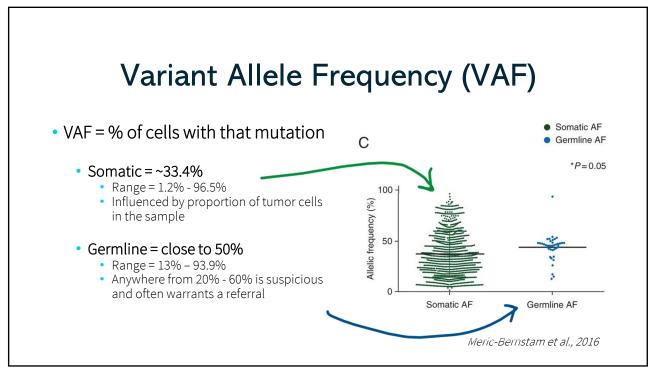


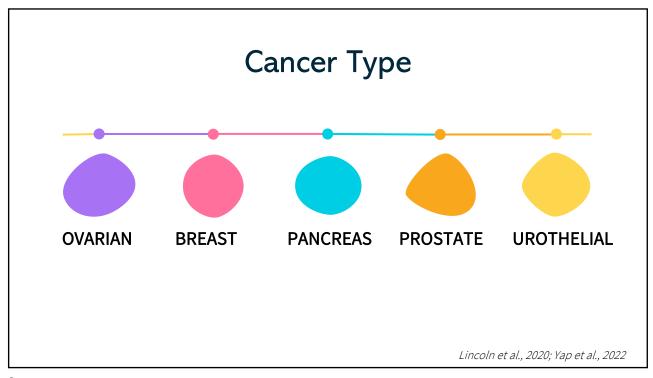


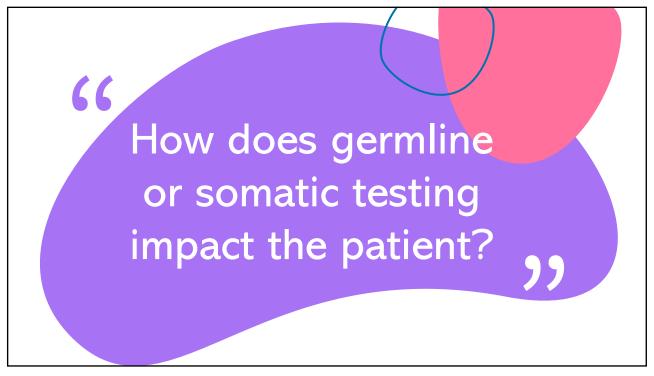
5

How do I know if a genetic variant is somatic or germline?



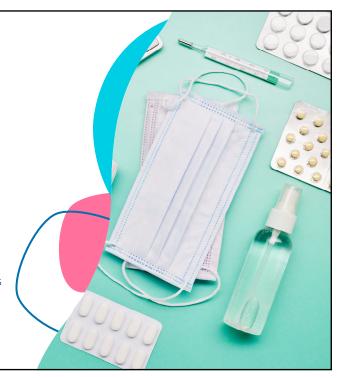






Cancer Treatment

- Targeted Therapies
 - Somatic testing helps to identify patients that would respond to targeted therapy
 - Molecular targets can provide improved outcomes
- Clinical Trials
 - Somatic and germline testing helps to identify patients that are eligible for certain clinical trials
- Surgical Options
 - Germline testing helps to identify patients that may be candidates for a different surgery if they have a hereditary cancer syndrome that places them at a high risk to develop cancer again



11

Impact for Family Members

Germline



Often inherited and can be passed down



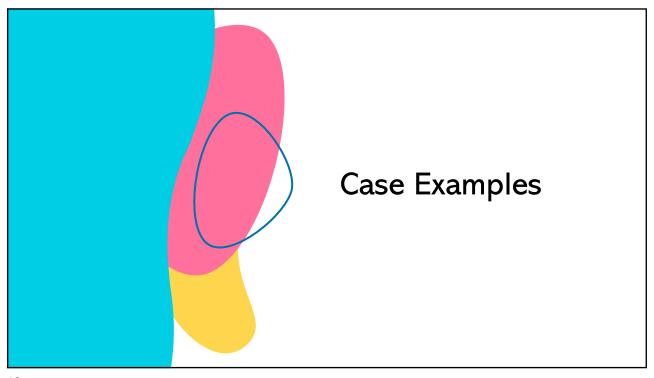
- 50% chance for first-degree relatives to test positive
- Impacts their cancer risks and screening recommendations
- May impact family planning options

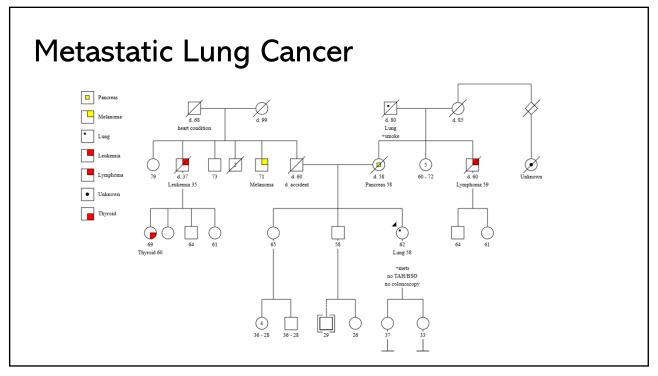
Somatic

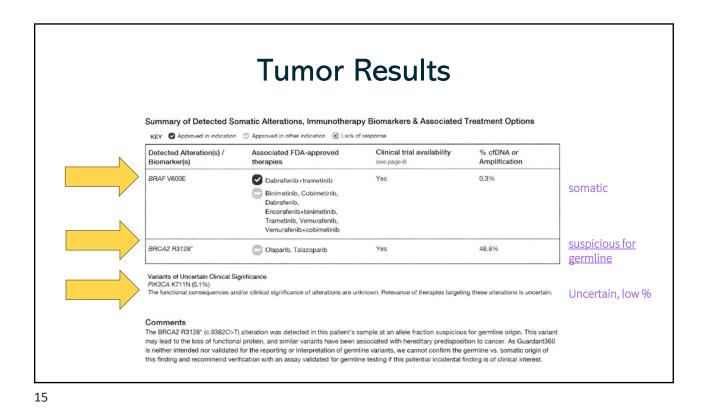
Not inherited/passed down

 No testing needed for relatives

Meric-Bernstam et al., 2016; Lincoln et al., 2020







Case Examples — Germline Results

BRCA1/2 Analyses with CustomNext-Cancer® +RNAinsight®

RESULTS

BRCA2 Pathogenic Mutation: p.R5120*

SUMMARY

POSITIVE: Pathogenic Mutation Detected

INTERPRETATION

1 This individual in Indexcygous for the p.R5126* (c.9382C-17) pathogenic mutation in the BRCA2 gene.
1 This result is consistent with a diagnosis of herbiditary brait and covarian cancer (18-67-19), pathogenic mutation in the BRCA2 gene.
1 This result is consistent with a diagnosis of herbiditary brait and covarian cancer (18-67-19), pathogenic mutation in the BRCA2 gene.
1 This result is consistent with a diagnosis of herbiditary brait and covarian cancer (18-67-19), pathogenic mutation in the BRCA2 gene.
1 This result is consistent with a diagnosis of herbiditary brait and covariant cancer (18-71-19), pathogenic mutations in family members can be helpful in identifying stirisk individuals.
1 Cenetic testing for pathogenic mutations in family members can be helpful in identifying stirisk individuals.
2 Cenetic counseling is a recommended oglion for all individuals undergoing genetic testing.
No edificial pulpagenic mutations, variants of unincoma significance, or gines deletions or disjuications were detected. Genes Analyzed (80 total), APP ARK, APP, APP, APP, BPR, APP, BRPD, BBAS, BRACE, BBAS, BRAC

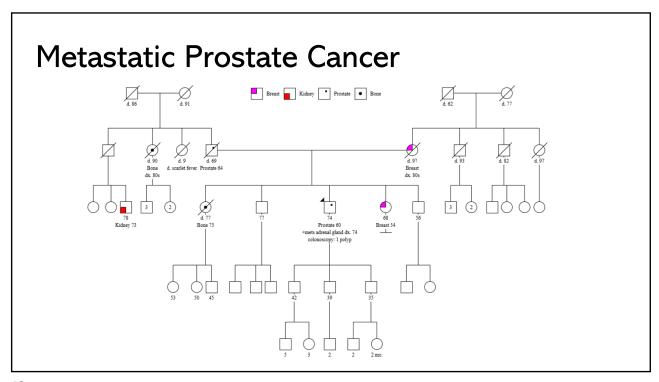
Treatment

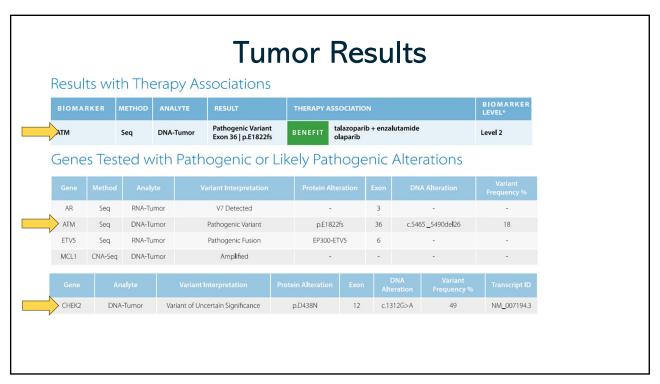
Somatic BRCA2 mutation Germline BRCA2 mutation

- PARP inhibitor therapy candidate (Olaparib and talazoparib)
- Clinical trial eligibility
- Breast Cancer (Female): 55-69% lifetime risk –discussion about risk-reducing mastectomies
- Breast Cancer (Males): 1.8-7.1%
- Ovarian Cancer: 13-29% discussion about surgical removal of ovaries
- Pancreatic Cancer: 5-10% eligible for pancreas cancer screening
- Prostate Cancer: 19-61% for males
- Melanoma: Increased discussion about annual derm

NCCN BOPP V3.2025 Guidelines

17





Case Examples – Germline Results

BRCA1/2 Analyses with CancerNext-Expanded®: Analyses of Genes Associated with Hereditary Cancer (76 genes)

RESULTS

CHEK2 Variant, Unknown Significance: p.D438N

SUMMARY

Variant of Unknown Significance Detected

INTERPRETATION

- No known clinically actionable alterations were detected.
- One variant of unknown significance was detected in the CHEK2 gene
- Risk Estimate: should be based on clinical and family history, as the clinical significance of this result is unknown.
- Genetic counseling is a recommended option for all individuals undergoing genetic testing.

This individual is heterozygous for the p.D438N (c.1312Gs-A) variant of unknown significance in the CHEK2 gene, which may or may not contribute to this individual's clinical history. Refer to the supplementary pages for additional information on this variant. No additional pathogenic mutations, variants of unknown significance, or gross deletions or duplications were detected. Genes Analyzed (76 Iotal): AIP, AIL, APC, ATM, BAP1, BARD1, BMP114, BRCA1, BRCA2, BRIP1, CDC73, CDH1, CDK4, CDKN18, CDKN2A, CEBPA, CHEK2, DICER1, ETV6, FH, FLCN, BAP1, BARD1, BMP114, BRT, ME1, MET, MLH1, MSH2, MSH6, MUTYH, NF1, NF2, NTHL1, PALB2, PHOX2B, PMS2, POT1, PRKAR1A, PTCH1, PTEN, RAD51C, RAD51D, RB1, RET, RIUX1, SDHA, SDHAP2, SDHB, SDHC, SDHD, SMAD4, SMARCA3, MARCB1, SMARCE1, STK11, SUFU, TMEM127, TPS3, TSC1, TSC2, VHL and WT1 (sequencing and); EFCAM and GREMIT (selficiation); AXIN2, CTNNA1, DDX41, EGPR, HOXB13, KTf, MBD4, MITF, MSH3, PDGFRA, POLD1 and POLE (sequencing only); EFCAM and GREMIT (deletion/duplication only).

- CHEK2- not on our gene list
- Pers hx of prostate ca and fam hx of breast ca fits with CHEK2 gene
- Classified as "uncertain" by another germline lab

21

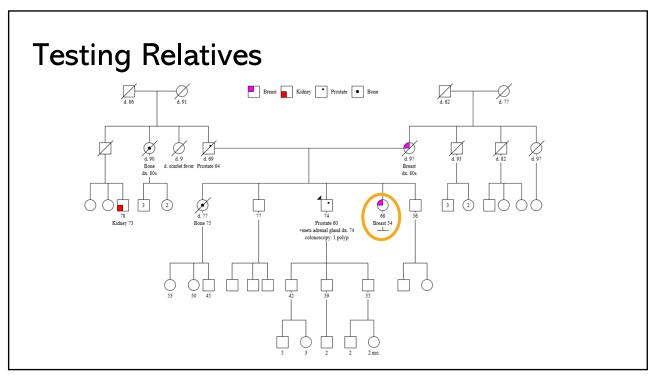
Treatment

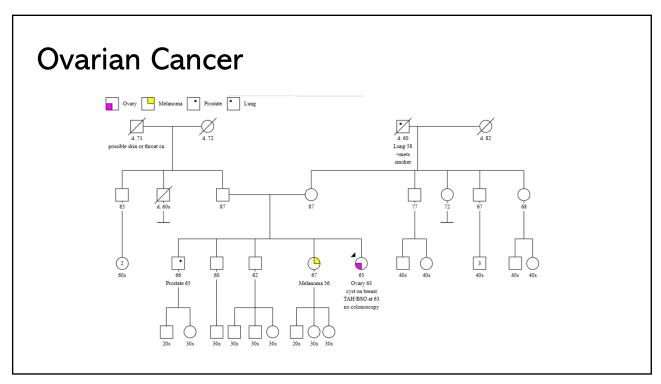
Somatic *ATM* mutation

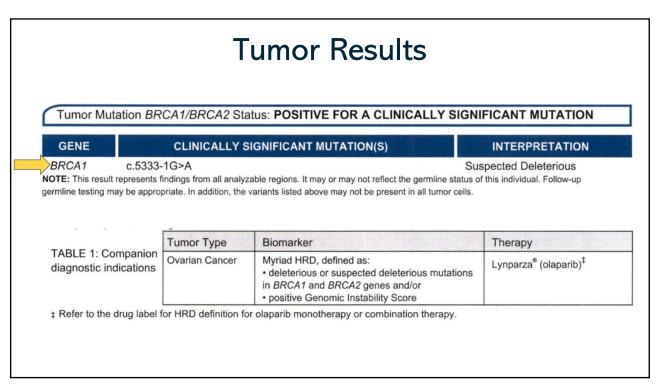
 PARP inhibitor therapy: Talozoparib + enzalutamide or olaparib

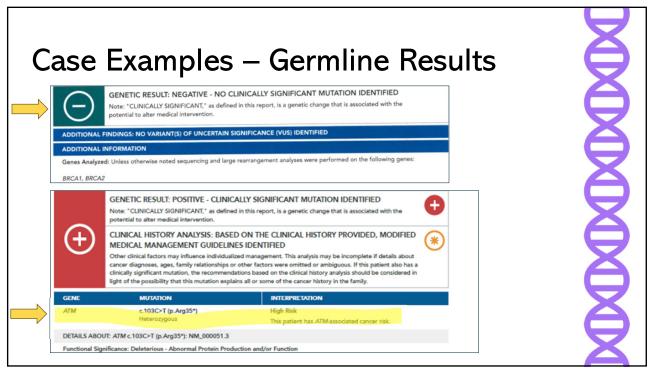
Germline CHEK2VUS

 No management changes based on variant of uncertain significance









Treatment

Somatic BRCA1 mutation

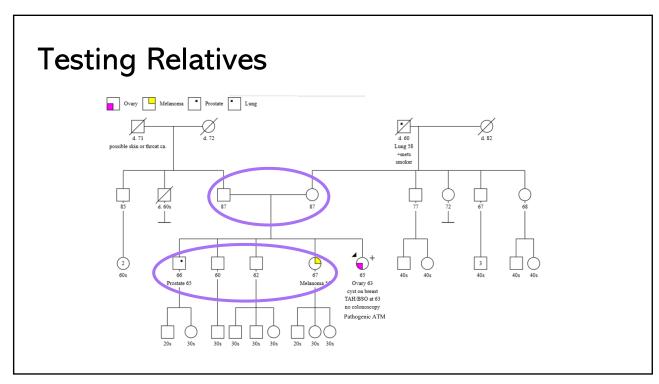
 PARP inhibitor therapy candidate (olaparib)

Germline ATM mutation

- Breast Cancer: 21-24% lifetime risk -Qualifies for high-risk breast screening
- Ovarian Cancer: 2-3%
- Pancreatic Cancer: 5-10% eligible for discussion of pancreas cancer screening
- Colorectal Cancer: 5-10%
- Prostate Cancer: Increased for males

NCCN BOPP V3.2025 Guidelines

27



Takeaways

- Somatic = tumor DNA vs. Germline = all cells/born with DNA
- The gene, VAF, and cancer type can all be clues to know if a somatic mutation is indicative of a germline one
- Both somatic and germline testing play a role in cancer treatment
- 4 Never hesitate to reach out to your genetic counselor with questions! ☺

29

References

- Connor, S., and Forman, A., (2017). You Have a Somatic Genomics Report: Now What? Navigating somatic vs germline mutations [Webinar]. National Society of Genetic Counselors Cancer Special Interest Group. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVmSfj0xzro
- Kruzel, M., Johnson, R., and Wilson, K. (2021). Surviving Somatic Sequencing: a Straightforward Start to a Strange Space [Webinar]. Quest Diagnostics. https://www.questdiagnostics.com/healthcare-professionals/clinical-education-center/webinars/2021/surviving-somatic-sequencing
- Lincoln, S. E., et al. (2020). Yield and Utility of Germline Testing Following Tumor Sequencing in Patients With Cancer. JAMA network open, 3(10), e2019452. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.19452
- Meric-Bernstam, F., et al. (2016). Incidental germline variants in 1000 advanced cancers on a prospective somatic genomic profiling protocol. *Annals of oncology: official journal of the European Society for Medical Oncology, 27*(5), 795–800. https://doi.org/10.1093/annonc/mdw018
- National Cancer Institute. (2022). Targeted Therapy to Treat Cancer. Accessed May 23, 2025. https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/types/targeted-therapies
- National Comprehensive Cancer Network. (2025). Genetic/Familial High-Risk Assessment: Breast, Ovarian, Pancreatic, and Prostate V3. https://www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/pdf/genetics_bopp.pdf
- PowerPoint Stock Images
- Schrader, K. A., et al. (2016). Germline Variants in Targeted Tumor Sequencing Using Matched Normal DNA. JAMA oncology, 2(1), 104–111. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaoncol.2015.5208
- Yap, T. A., Ashok, A., Stoll, J., Mauer, E., Nepomuceno, V. M., Blackwell, K. L., Garber, J. E., & Meric-Bernstam, F. (2022). Prevalence of Germline Findings Among Tumors From Cancer Types Lacking Hereditary Testing Guidelines. *JAMA network open*, 5(5), e2213070. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.13070

Thank you!

Questions?

Jessie Poskochil, MGC, CGC jessie.poskochil@unmc.edu 402-552-3089

