

Factsheet on Breast International Group (BIG against breast cancer) – company profile

*A woman's chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer is 1 in 8, and in 2010 approximately 1 million people, including 10 thousand men, were diagnosed with the disease, making it the **second most common form of cancer in the world**. Developing countries account for about half of all breast cancer cases and 70% of all mortalities. There has been progress – over the last thirty years, mortality rates have declined and, thanks to improvements in early detection and better treatment, 75% of patients in most developed countries today survive beyond the crucial first 5 years. However, with worldwide deaths from cancer predicted to increase by 45% to 11 million by 2030, the need for an effective way to fight this trend remains strong.*

The **Breast International Group (BIG)** is a not-for-profit organisation for academic breast cancer research groups from around the world, with its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. BIG facilitates and accelerates international breast cancer research by stimulating cooperation between its members and other academic networks, and collaborating with, but working independently from, the pharmaceutical industry.

Truly international reach

Founded by European opinion leaders in 1999, BIG now constitutes a network of 59 collaborative groups from Europe, Canada, Latin America, Middle East, Asia and Australasia. These entities are tied to several thousand specialised hospitals and research centres worldwide. BIG is a truly international body focused exclusively on conducting and coordinating breast cancer research, primarily through clinical trials and innovative research programmes. To test new treatments with enough patients to be confident about the results, clinical research should not be limited to one institution, or even to one country.

Real research

BIG designs and conducts its own research through its member groups and their extended network of hospitals and investigators – BIG does not simply redistribute funding to other third parties. BIG trials that are conducted in collaboration with the pharmaceutical industry are done so in a manner designed to maintain independence and eliminate bias, keeping patients' interests at the heart. More than 30 clinical trials and several research programmes are ongoing or are under development under the BIG umbrella at any given time. BIG also works closely with the US National Cancer Institute and the North American Breast Cancer Group, so that together they act as a strong integrating force in the breast cancer research arena.

Research principles

BIG facilitates academic research but also works closely with the pharmaceutical industry in a way that is “win-win” for all. BIG trials respect specific principles of research conduct to ensure that data collected are handled and analysed independently, generating highly credible results. Moreover, patients are followed long after treatment ends, with the aim to detect long-term side effects. BIG studies are also governed by committees and policies designed to reduce bias and protect the patient. Finally, the processes surrounding access by scientists to precious tumour and other tissues donated by patients for future research are subject to strict rules to ensure that only the best research ideas are supported.

Faster results

BIG has the ability to achieve faster results and greater patient benefits by enrolling larger numbers of patients into clinical trials more quickly, and doing so in many countries around the world.