

Pitt Research Discoveries

Pioneering Breast Cancer Research

Bernard Fisher, MD (August 23, 1918 - October 15, 2019), born and raised in Pittsburgh, was a surgeon and pioneer in breast cancer research. As Chairman of the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project (NSABP) at Pitt for 30 years, Fisher oversaw large, national clinical trials that improved the surgical management of breast cancer, led to more effective treatments that increased survival rates, and made groundbreaking discoveries about the way cancers spread.

Perhaps the greatest contributions of Dr. Fisher's work include NSABP's first clinical trial undertaken in 1958 demonstrating that chemotherapy could significantly decrease cancer recurrences in some breast cancer patients, the highly controversial studies in 1970s establishing that less extensive lumpectomy surgeries were just as effective as mastectomies, the findings in 1982 showing that a hormonal drug called tamoxifen improved survival, and a 1992 trial showing that tamoxifen could help prevent the development of breast cancer in women at an increased risk.



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