

## **JScreen Launches National Cancer Genetic Screening Program**

*JScreen's National Cancer Initiative Will Offer a Comprehensive Testing Panel to Analyze the BRCA Genes and Over 60 Other Cancer Susceptibility Genes*

(ATLANTA) – JScreen, a national public health initiative based out of Emory University School of Medicine’s Department of Human Genetics, today announced a new program that will offer at-home testing for more than 60 cancer susceptibility genes associated with hereditary risks for breast, ovarian, prostate, colorectal, skin and many other cancers.

“Making cancer genetic testing accessible is key,” said Jane Lowe Meisel, MD, Associate Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology at the Emory University School of Medicine, and medical director for JScreen’s cancer program. “This type of testing is important because it alerts people to their risks before they get cancer. They can then take action to help prevent cancer altogether or to detect it at an early, treatable stage.”

Unlike direct to consumer companies, JScreen’s cancer program offers highly accurate testing that uses state-of-the-art genetic sequencing technology. The robust cancer testing panel includes genes that are actionable, meaning there is something that can be done to help prevent cancer if a person tests positive. Importantly, licensed genetic counselors provide information via phone or secure video conferencing to ensure that people understand their results.

Until now, JScreen’s focus has been on reproductive carrier screening for diseases like Tay-Sachs that occur more commonly in the Jewish population, as well as diseases such as cystic fibrosis that are common in the general population. JScreen has tested thousands of participants and given high-risk couples essential information about options to help them have healthy children.

JScreen heard from members of Jewish communities across the U.S. that they were interested in genetic testing to assess personal cancer risk. Their concerns stemmed from the fact that Ashkenazi Jewish men and women face a 1 in 40 risk of carrying mutations in the *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* genes; this is **more than 10 times the risk in the general population**. Ashkenazi Jews are at increased risk for carrying these mutations even if they do not have a personal or close family history of *BRCA*-related cancers.

To meet this need, JScreen and Emory’s Winship Cancer Institute launched the Atlanta PEACH BRCA pilot study in July of 2019 to assess interest in testing for the *BRCA* genes. Through this study, JScreen offered at-home *BRCA* testing to eligible Ashkenazi Jews age 25 and older who did not have personal or close family histories of related cancers, but were at risk based on their ancestry. The study enrolled more than 500 eligible participants in less than 6 months. The results of this study confirmed interest in at-home cancer genetic testing for *BRCA* and other cancer susceptibility genes in this community, and helped inform best practices for the national launch of JScreen’s cancer genetic screening initiative.

“I never even thought to get screened until I learned about JScreen’s study in Atlanta last year,” says Karen Smerling, age 62, of Atlanta. “After I underwent screening, I found out I

was *BRCA2* positive. I chose to have a bilateral mastectomy before cancer could possibly come my way. JScreen did indeed save my life and can do so for others who take the first steps toward genetic testing.”

“Knowledge is power. With an understanding and awareness of their cancer risks and available options, individuals can work with their health-care providers on next steps,” said Karen Arnovitz Grinzaid, MS, CGC, Assistant Professor of Human Genetics at Emory University School of Medicine, and JScreen’s Executive Director. “Launching our new cancer program and providing convenient and affordable access to cancer genetic testing will help save lives. We are thrilled to bring this important resource to the Jewish community.”

Please visit [JScreen.org](http://JScreen.org) for more information.

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#### *About JScreen*

*JScreen is a national non-profit public health initiative dedicated to preventing Jewish genetic diseases. Headquartered in Atlanta at Emory University School of Medicine, the JScreen initiative provides convenient at-home access to cutting-edge genetic testing technology, patient education and genetic counseling services. JScreen believes the combination of education, access to premier genetic screening technologies and personalized, confidential support are the keys to preventing devastating diseases.*