



Pandora's DNA: Tracing the Breast Cancer Genes Through History, Science, and One Family Tree

Lizzie Stark

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Would you cut out your healthy breasts and ovaries if you thought it might save your life? That's not a theoretical question for journalist Lizzie Stark's relatives, who grapple with the horrific legacy of cancer built into the family DNA. It is a BRCA mutation that has robbed most of her female relatives of breasts, ovaries, peace of mind, or life itself. In *Pandora's DNA*, Stark uses her family's experience to frame a larger story about the so-called breast cancer genes, exploring the morass of legal quandaries, scientific developments, medical breakthroughs, and ethical concerns that surround the BRCA mutations. She tells of the troubling history of prophylactic surgery and the storied origins of the boob job and relates the landmark lawsuit against Myriad Genetics, which held patents on the BRCA genes every human carries in their body until the Supreme Court overturned them in 2013. Although a genetic test for cancer risk may sound like the height of scientific development, the treatment remains crude and barbaric. Through her own experience, Stark shows what it's like to live in a brave new world where gazing into a crystal ball of genetics has many unintended consequences.

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