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A mini-review of oral contraceptives to evaluate and define their contribution to breast cancer prediction

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Background: Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in England. Oral contraceptives (OCs), one of the most popular forms of contraception in the United Kingdom, has been implicated in causing breast cancer.

Aims: We evaluated and defined the contribution of OCs to breast cancer risk, and whether this differed with type and duration. We also addressed how this information could be utilised for the development and validation of the CanRisk cancer risk assessment tool.

Method: We conducted a systematic review following the methodology recommended in the PRISMA Group (2009).

Results & Discussion: Of the 2,079 unique citations screened, seven studies relevant to breast cancer in the UK were identified. The risk of ever-user of OCs on breast cancer incidence was modest, and typically found in current and recent OC users. This effect was lost within 10 years, and the association was largely independent of duration or type. These findings allowed us to develop the CanRisk tool and pose two questions related to usage and most recent use.

Conclusion: The actual relationship between ever- versus never- users was far more complex, with positive associations found between use and breast cancer risk in current and recent users, young women, and before first-full term birth. Whether these relationships were all interconnected was beyond the scope of this analysis but remain points of interest requiring further investigation.

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