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Hereditary breast and ovarian cancer: two cases of double heterozygosity for pathogenic variants in the *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* and *ATM* genes

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Introduction: Hereditary breast and ovarian cancer (HBOC) is estimated to represent 5-10% of all breast and ovarian cancer cases. Pathogenic germline variants in *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* account for 25% of familial cases. The identification of genetic defects in HBOC patients allows detection of carriers that can benefit from cancer risk management protocols, and predictive genetic testing to at-risk family members, after appropriate genetic counseling. Two female patients with a personal and family history of cancer were studied by next-generation sequencing (NGS).

Methods: NGS using TruSight Cancer Panel (Illumina) followed by bioinformatic analysis of 18 genes associated with HBOC was performed. Pathogenic variants were confirmed by Sanger sequencing.

Results: A rare event of double heterozygosity for pathogenic variants was identified in both patients: patient A was heterozygous for *BRCA1*:c.2037delinsCC, p.(Lys679Asn*4) and *ATM*:c.3802delG, p.(Val1268*) and patient B carried both *BRCA2*:c.6001dupT, p.(Ser2001Phefs*2) and *ATM*:3435_3436delTGinsA, p.(Asp1145Glufs*11). After genetic counseling, three relatives of patient A were analyzed: while one of her two healthy sons was heterozygous for the *ATM* variant, the other was a double heterozygote for *BRCA1*:c.2037delinsCC and *ATM*:c.3802delG; a female cousin, recently diagnosed with breast cancer, was a carrier of *ATM*:c.3802delG only.

Conclusions: The identification of these two rare cases of double heterozygosity for pathogenic variants in *BRCA1/BRCA2* and *ATM* genes, highlights the importance of using NGS-gene panel testing in HBOC. If molecular analysis had been restricted to *BRCA* genes only, the pathogenic *ATM* variants would have been missed in both families, depriving them of appropriate genetic counseling and cancer risk management.