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## Breast cancer mouse

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**Jonathan B Weitzman**

**Email:** jonathanweitzman@hotmail.com

In mice, null mutations of the breast cancer susceptibility gene *Brcal* result in **embryonic lethality**. In the May 15 *Genes & Development*, Ludwig *et al.* describe the generation of a mutant mouse that expresses a truncated *Brcal* protein that mimics mutations found in human breast cancer patients (*Genes & Development* 2001, **15**:1188-1193). They used a two-step 'knock-in' targeting strategy to insert a stop codon in *Brcal* exon 11. The genetic background of the mice determined the extent of embryonic lethality. Surviving mice homozygous for the truncated *Brcal* allele developed tumours at high frequency (about 85%) at around 17 months of age. The tumour spectrum included lymphomas, sarcomas, and carcinomas, and histologically diverse breast carcinomas developed in some mutant mice. The authors speculate that the truncated *Brcal* protein plays a role in the late stages of tumour progression.

## References

1. In search of the tumour-suppressor functions of BRCA1 and BRCA2.
2. The tumor suppressor gene *Brcal* is required for embryonic cellular proliferation in the mouse.
3. *Genes & Development*, [<http://www.genesdev.org>]