The advent of genetic testing for breast and ovarian cancer predisposition has created heightened public awareness. The perception of a breast cancer epidemic coupled with the discovery of genes that confer susceptibility to breast and ovarian cancer have led to an explosion of media coverage about breast cancer. Unfortunately, magazine and newspaper articles, television specials, and news broadcasts may raise awareness but confuse consumers because increased attention does not always translate into accurate understanding (Rubin, 1996; Russell, 1993). Previous research indicates that many women with a family history of breast cancer perceive their personal risk for the disease to be much higher than it is (Lerman, Kash, & Stephanek, 1994; Lerman & Schwartz, 1993).

Gail J. Hurt, RN, MAEd, LPC, is the associate director for patient education and clinical services for the Cancer Patient Support Program at the Comprehensive Cancer Center and associate director of the Breast Cancer Risk Assessment and Counseling Clinic, Richard P. McQuellon, PhD, is the director for Psychosocial Oncology and Cancer Patient Support Program at the Comprehensive Cancer Center, Robert Michielutte, PhD, is a research professor for the Department of Family and Community Medicine, Daragh M. Conrad, MS, is a genetics counselor for the Department of Pediatrics, and Seth Carter, BS, is employed at the Comprehensive Cancer Center, all in the School of Medicine at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC. Heidi Anderson, MD, is employed in the School of Medicine at the University of Cincinnati in OH. (Submitted February 2000. Accepted for publication February 29, 2001.)