The lifetime risk for breast cancer in the United States is 12%, which means that one in eight women will be affected. In 2002, approximately 203,500 women and 1,500 men in the United States were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer and 54,300 individuals were diagnosed with in situ breast cancer. An estimated 40,000 died from the disease in 2002 (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2002b).

The number of deaths attributed to breast cancer declined from 1992–1998 as a result of earlier detection and improved treatments (ACS, 2002b). Healthcare providers have long understood that early detection of breast cancer, including risk assessment, screenings, and self-examinations, increases long-term survival. Now, increasing evidence suggests that the risk of developing breast cancer also can be reduced (Prout, 2000). In fact, lifestyle changes, surgery, and medications may pre- vent cancer in selected women (Prout). Risk assessment and consultation are appropriate for anyone concerned about the risk of developing breast cancer. Interventions for primary prevention of breast cancer soon may become one of the most effective means of reducing the incidence, morbidity, and mortality of breast cancer. Risk assessments and counseling about intervention options now can be considered a standard of care (Knaus, 2002).

This article describes the role of the oncology nurse practitioner (NP) in a breast cancer prevention clinic. One NP supported by two board-certified medical oncologists opened this clinic in October 2000. Risk assessments, history and physical examinations, recommendations for surveillance and intervention, genetic counseling and testing, and education are included in the one- to two-hour office visit.