

# Singing the Life. The Story of a Family in the Shadow of Cancer

Elizabeth Bryan

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Elizabeth Bryan is a pediatrician who is well known for her work with twins and multiples. She is the author of several books on multiple births and established the Multiple Birth Foundation in the United Kingdom. *Singing the Life* is very different from her previous publications. It deals with the consequences of a genetic mutation in her own family.

Bryan has two sisters who developed breast and ovarian cancer as a consequence of having inherited a mutation in the BRCA1 gene. She herself took preventive measures, but in her early 60s developed pancreatic cancer, possibly also as a consequence of the same gene mutation. Bryan describes, as a patient,

as a doctor, and as a scientist, the experiences of her sisters, herself, and their extended family.

The book moves beyond the personal experience and discusses the issues faced by gene mutation carriers of genetic testing, prophylactic oophorectomy and mastectomy and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. Both ethical and practical issues are reflected upon, and the last chapter offers some very well informed thoughts about the problems of genetic testing for inherited diseases that are not expressed until later in life, or may not be expressed at all.

Dorret Boomsma

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