455 consecutive patients with operable breast cancer were screened for study eligibility.

312 patients were eligible:
- 143 were excluded:
  - 42 had an early disease relapse
  - 44 did not have CTC assessed at any time
  - 15 did not have CTC assessed during follow up years: 0-2
  - 41 did not have CTC assessed during follow up years: 3-5
  - 1 had advanced stage disease

1st & 2nd year of FU
- CK-19 mRNA⁻ (n=149)
  - Persistently Negative Patients
  - Persistently Positive Patients
- CK-19 mRNA⁺ (n=163)
  - Negative Turn to Positive Patients
  - Positive Turn to Negative Patients

3rd – 5th year of FU
- CK-19 mRNA⁻ (n=80)
- CK-19 mRNA⁺ (n=69)
- CK-19 mRNA⁻ (n=64)
- CK-19 mRNA⁺ (n=99)