

SMIL CONTINUES TO RECOMMEND AGE 40 SCREENING MAMMOGRAPHY GUIDELINES

In light of the September 23, 2010 article in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) regarding a Norwegian study on the benefit of screening mammography in women over age 50, we felt it important to continue to clarify Scottsdale Medical Imaging's recommendation. At SMIL, we are committed to continuing to focus on the importance of early detection in effort to find breast cancer early and improve patient outcomes. **We recommend women see their doctors regularly and recommend annual mammograms starting at age 40, earlier depending on some risks factors such as family history and genetic factors.**

Breast cancer–related deaths have declined by 30 percent since 1990 when mammography screening guidelines were enforced in the U.S. Awareness and better treatments certainly attribute to this decrease, but it is no coincidence that the declining trends are consistent with more women getting mammograms.

In fact, new regulations by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will require private health insurers to cover preventive and early detection services, including annual mammograms for women age 40 and older, with no cost sharing or co-pays in health plans issued or renewed after September 23, 2010.

The recommendation from breast health experts including the American Cancer Society and American College of Radiology is consistent: 40 is the age to schedule your first mammogram and start an annual routine. Because 75 percent of women with breast cancer have no family history, there's no reason to wait. Following the American Cancer Society's guidelines for the early detection of breast cancer improves the chances that breast cancer can be diagnosed at an early stage and treated successfully. When detected early, there is a 96 percent chance of survival.

More than 1 million women worldwide are diagnosed with breast cancer each year and more than 500,000 die from it. In the United States last year, there were an estimated 194,280 new cases and 40,610 deaths from the disease.

The Society of Breast Imaging is currently running a Mammography Saves Lives campaign to help clear up the confusion on when and how often women should receive mammograms, mammographysaveslives.org

Highlights of that awareness campaign include the following points:

- Mammography has helped reduce breast cancer mortality in the U.S. by nearly 1/3 since 1990
- 1 in 5 breast cancers occur in women aged 40-49
- The ten year risk for breast cancer in a 40-year-old woman is 1 in 69
- 40% of patient years of life saved by mammography are in women aged 40-49
- Even for women 50+, skipping a mammogram every other year would miss up to 30% of cancers
- 3/4 of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history of the disease and are not considered high-risk

SMIL will continue to follow the ACS breast cancer screening guidelines and recommend that women begin getting annual mammograms at age 40. The medical imaging community continues to work toward better tests. However, today, mammography remains the best tool for screening for breast cancer and detecting it early.

As a community, we need to work toward raising awareness, educating the public and increasing screening access in order to overcome this disease. Early detection truly is the best protection.

Additional Resources:

[American College of Radiology Response](#)

[American Cancer Society Blog Response](#)

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