



American Society of Breast Disease Encourages All Women 40 and Older To Have Annual Mammograms

Recent media coverage on the use of mammography to screen for breast cancer continues to cause confusion for women concerned with their breast health. The American Society of Breast Disease (ASBD) recommends that women over 40 continue to have annual mammograms. The ASBD recognizes that although mammography is not a perfect tool, it provides an ability to detect breast cancer in its earliest and most treatable stages that is unmatched by any other currently available method.

This most recent controversy regarding mammography was sparked by a reanalysis of previous studies, published in the journal *Lancet*, which challenges the benefits of mammography. These prior studies had been subject to extensive, critical peer review in a consensus conference conducted by the National Institutes of Health in 1997 which concluded that screening mammography results in a reduction in breast cancer mortality. No new relevant randomized trial data have become available since.

As this debate continues, the ASBD believes that a multidisciplinary approach to the diagnosis and proper treatment of breast cancer is still the most appropriate goal. Our national agenda should be to make early detection methods and treatment of breast cancer universally available.

The ASBD - the nation's leading medical organization committed to a multidisciplinary approach to breast health management - also recognizes the limitations of current screening methods of all kinds. We encourage continued and increased support for the research needed to improve early detection and prevention methods for breast cancer, which in 2002 will kill more than 40,000 women in the United States.

This year more than 200,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer. As a result of early detection through screening mammography and other techniques, and earlier use of improved and targeted treatments, deaths from breast cancer have declined 2 percent a year for the past decade.

The Choice to Have a Mammogram

The decision to have a screening mammogram rests with the woman herself. A woman who is uncertain about mammography should consult with her healthcare expert, who can best help evaluate her personal circumstance. If a woman has a family history of breast or other cancer or if she has breast health concerns, she may want to consult with her doctor about when to begin regular screening.

There is general agreement that multiple studies have documented the reduction in breast cancer deaths due to early detection of breast cancer through mammograms. We advise that monthly breast self-examination should be an integral part of every woman's health routine, and that an annual breast examination should complement mammographic assessment. Should breast cancer be diagnosed, treatment and management of breast disease should involve a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals.

Summary

The American Society of Breast Disease encourages the regular use of mammographic screening in addition to further research into other screening techniques for the early detection of breast cancer. The ASBD believes that current facts document the benefits of mammography. As a result, the Society encourages all women 40 and older to have annual mammograms accompanied by clinical breast examinations.