

American Cancer Society Marks National Mammography Day by Reinforcing Importance of Mammograms

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Today is National Mammography Day, and the American Cancer Society is urging women 40 and older to get a yearly mammogram, especially in light of recent data suggesting a decline in mammography rates in the U.S.

A study in the June 15, 2007 issue of *CANCER* found a significant decline in mammography screening nationwide. The worrisome trend comes after decades of increasing mammography use, which has contributed to drops in the breast cancer mortality rate of more than two percent per year since 1990.

"While mammography screenings in women 40 and older increased dramatically, from just 39 percent in 1987 to 70 percent by the year 2000, the most recent data shows that mammography rates have declined by as much as four percentage points, to about 66 percent in the latest time period (2004)," said Richard C. Wender, M.D., national volunteer president of the Society.

"Mammography remains the most effective screening test for the early detection of breast cancer available to women today. If we want to continue to make progress in eliminating breast cancer as a major health threat, we need to support women and urge them to continue making screening a priority."

The decline in mammography screenings has implications for the progress made in reducing breast cancer incidence and mortality rates. While the newly-released Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2007-2008 reported that the breast cancer incidence rate in the U.S. has decreased by 3.5 percent per year between 2001 and 2004, the authors say the decline is due in part to the fact that women are less likely to receive mammograms.

To help remind women about the vital importance of getting a yearly mammogram, the Society is providing a free mammogram reminder tool at <http://www.cancer.org/MammogramReminder> where women can sign up to receive an email reminding them to schedule their yearly mammography screening.

Because every woman deserves access to the mammograms they need, the Society's sister advocacy organization, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action NetworkSM (ACS CAN), is also urging Congress to boost funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP). The NBCCEDP provides breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnosis to low-income, uninsured and underinsured women who would not otherwise have access to these services. In April, President George W. Bush signed legislation to reauthorize the program; however, more funding is needed, as lack of funding currently limits the program to serving only one in five eligible women nationwide. Last month, the Society and ACS CAN announced a major initiative to improve access to quality health care for all Americans.

In addition, the Society is reminding women of all ages of its breast cancer screening guidelines to promote early detection:

- Women 40 years and older should receive a yearly mammogram for as long as they are in good health.
- Women in their 20s and 30s should receive a clinical breast exam (CBE) as part of a periodic health exam about every three years; women 40 and older should receive a CBE every year.

- Women should know how their breasts normally feel and report any breast change promptly to their health care providers. Breast self-exam (BSE) is an option for women starting in their 20s.
- Women at high risk (greater than 20 percent lifetime risk) should get an MRI and a mammogram every year and women at moderately increased risk (15 to 20 percent lifetime risk) should talk with their doctors about the benefits and limitations of adding MRI screening to their yearly mammogram. Yearly MRI screening is not recommended for women whose lifetime risk of breast cancer is less than 15 percent.

According to Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2007-2008, 178,480 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected among women in the U.S. and approximately 40,460 women are expected to die from breast cancer in 2007. Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among women, accounting for more than one in four cancers diagnosed in U.S women. Only lung cancer accounts for more cancer deaths in women.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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