



November 17, 2009

The following is a statement by Deborah O'Connell, M.D., medical director of radiology and breast imaging at The Deborah O'Connell Women's Imaging Center in Austin, TX. The statement is in response to new breast cancer mammography screening guideline recommendations announced today by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Among others, the task force said that screening mammography should not be done routinely for women age 40-49 years, that mammography should be performed every two years rather than every year for women ages 50-74 and that women should not be routinely screened after age 75.

Dr. O'Connell's position, which supports annual screening mammograms for women beginning at age 40, is the same position supported by the American Cancer Society, the American College of Radiology, and the Society of Breast Imaging. In fact, according to the American Cancer Society, 17 percent of breast cancer deaths in 2006 were among women who were diagnosed between ages 40 and 49.

"Women need a clear message: early detection offers a woman the best chance for a cure, and mammography is essential for early detection of breast cancer. We know that digital mammography significantly improves the detection of cancer in young women and in women with dense breasts. Adopting the new guidelines would result in a major step backwards in women's health care and increased deaths from breast cancer. Failing to identify those women in their 40s with cancer and having them wait until they are screened at age 50 is a disservice. By then, breast cancer can be advanced and more difficult to treat."

The following are the American Cancer Society's breast cancer guidelines:

- Yearly mammograms are recommended starting at age 40 and continuing for as long as a woman is in good health.
- Clinical breast exam (CBE) should be part of a periodic health exam, about every three years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women 40 and over.
- 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.

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/17/health/17cancer.html?emc=eta1>