



Leadership in the Science, Policy and Practice of Preventive Medicine

NEWS

For Immediate Release

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**AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE
SUPPORTS BREAST CANCER SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE UNITED STATES PREVENTIVE SERVICES TASK FORCE**

Washington, D.C. - The American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) supports the US Preventive Services Task Force's (USPSTF) recommendation that women aged 40 to 49 years should decide after discussion with their doctors whether to have screening mammography on an individual basis instead of as routine practice.

The USPSTF updated its prior recommendation from 2002, which called for women 40 and older to have screening mammography once every 1 to 2 years. The update comes in light of more recent studies that have confirmed potential screening benefits but shown additional potential harms that can result. The studies show that successful screening requires five women to undergo breast biopsy for every case of invasive breast cancer detected.

According to ACPM President Mark B. Johnson, MD, MPH, FACPM, "The new recommendation reflects the most up-to-date findings based on a rigorous review of the scientific evidence. Doctors should inform a woman about the potential benefits and potential harms of mammography, allowing her to make decisions about her own health."

On Nov. 17, the USPSTF released its breast cancer screening recommendations in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. The panel finished its work and deliberations months in

advance of the release. In its accompanying survey of the evidence, the USPSTF highlighted several new studies shedding light on the problem of overdiagnosis. This occurs when screening detects incidental cancers that would not otherwise have caused problems for an individual. Most studies reviewed by the USPSTF estimated a one to ten percent overdiagnosis rate.

A more recent study from the July 2009 issue of *BMJ* (formerly the *British Medical Journal*) showed that for every 3 breast cancers detected on screening one would not have become clinically evident. The finding suggests that up to one-third of all breast cancers detected on screening result in unnecessary surgery, chemotherapy, and/or radiation therapy. Because the new studies showed increased potential harms of screening, the USPSTF changed their 2002 recommendation calling for routine mammography screening to start at age 50, instead of 40.

“The USPSTF is not trying to tell women in their forties to avoid breast cancer screening. It merely aims to encourage a conversation between doctor and patient in order to arrive at an informed decision,” said Dr. Johnson.

The USPSTF is an independent panel of experts in prevention and primary care that recommends best practices for clinical preventive services. Although it receives administrative support from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the government does not exert influence in USPSTF decision-making. The USPSTF does not consider cost in formulating its recommendations.

ABOUT AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

The American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) is the national professional society for physicians committed to disease prevention and health promotion. ACPM was established in 1954. Its 2,400 members are engaged in preventive medicine practice, teaching and research. Specialists in preventive medicine are uniquely trained in both clinical medicine and public health. They have the skills needed to understand and reduce the risks of disease, disability and death in individuals and in population groups. To learn more about the College, visit <http://www.acpm.org/>.

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