

The Canadian Society of Breast Imaging response to the new CTFPHC Guidelines

The new Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (CTFPHC) guidelines are outdated. While current screening continues to improve survival of women in their 50s and older, many of the breast cancer deaths among younger women in their 40s can be avoided by screening and early detection.

The new CTFPHC guidelines overly utilize data that is more than 30 years old. The guidelines ignore new research that incorporates the use of newer technologies and which show a 40-60% reduction in breast cancer mortality (*Coldman et al, JNCI 10/2014 and Tabar et al, Cancer 11/2018*), 3 to 4 times better than the 15% used by the CTFPHC.

Early detection allows for fewer mastectomies, less lymphedema and minimized treatment involving chemotherapy. It is evident that this data was not considered in the development of the CTFPHC guidelines.

The guideline methodology markedly exaggerates overdiagnosis. Wide variations of overdiagnosis of 0-58% are reported, whereas the most up-to-date is 10%; the CTFPHC used one of the highest values based on a single study that was not designed to study overdiagnosis.

A fourth major methodology flaw of the CTFPHC guidelines is the fact that they do not consider the harm that can ensue from *not* screening. Recent studies show that *not* participating in screening mammography leads to a 60% higher chance of *dying* from breast cancer (*Tabar et al, Cancer 2018*). Current data demonstrates 1 in 31 women have a lifetime risk of dying from breast cancer and women diagnosed in their 40s have not had the same improvement in survival with fewer (25%) of them being screened compared with the steadily improved outcomes for women in their 50s, 60s and 70s who have higher (68%) screening rates. The reality is that up to a third of lives lost to breast cancer occur in women in their 40s.

With 1 in 5 women being diagnosed with breast cancer under the age of 50, the logical outcome of these guidelines is that more younger women will continue to die unnecessarily because of the methodology failures and lack of consideration for current research. The Canadian Society of Breast Imaging (CSBI) is urging the CTFPHC to reconsider their guidelines and to revisit recent research on early screening for women in their 40s.

The CSBI is committed to saving lives and improving quality of care for patients. Through early detection of breast cancer, we can reduce the mortality rate for patients. By promoting evidence-based excellence in breast imaging and offering quality education to breast imaging professionals we can make a difference in the lives of Canadians.

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