

Yes, Virginia, Annual Mammograms are Saving Lives

With all of the confusion around breast cancer screening guidelines, have you questioned if it was beneficial to have an annual mammogram? Believe what you want about Santa Claus, but the most recent data affirms what many of us had thought. Mammograms are saving lives and annual mammograms for average risk women 40 and older are essential in that life saving quest.

A new report from the National Cancer Institute states that breast cancer death rates have dropped close to 40% since 1990. That equates to 274,000 lives saved according to the American College of Radiology (ACR). According to ACR's statement, "Regular mammography screening and improved therapies are undoubtedly responsible for the decline in breast cancer deaths. The data shows that in 1990, 73.8 out of 100,000 women died of breast cancer; in 2014 the number had dropped to 45.9 out of 100,000.

Increased use of digital breast tomosynthesis (DBT), also known to many as 3D mammographyTM, in regular screening has improved screening capability. The researchers found that the added sensitivity and specificity of breast tomosynthesis can also reduce follow-ups and minimize the stress and anxiety that many women experience when being recalled for additional imaging.

Not surprising, a study published in *Cancer* found 70 percent of women dying of breast cancer at Massachusetts General Hospital were women who had not undergone recommended screening. Statistics show that 20% of women do not have regular mammograms and there are certain communities that have serious access issues that make regular screening challenging. There is no doubt that annual screening in all appropriately aged women should be strongly encouraged. Dr. Anna Chen, Director of Women's Imaging at Windsong Radiology Group, PC stated, "Breast cancer screening gives us the ability to detect cancer early. Early detection of cancer when it is most easily treated can help preserve quality of life."

Windsong Radiology Group, PC, the area's leader in breast imaging, has offered 3D mammographyTM since 2011. The practice recently conducted its' own retrospective study of all the breast cancer patients who were diagnosed through screening exams in 2010 and 2014 to evaluate how digital breast tomosynthesis has impacted tumor detection with regard to tumor size and imaging characteristics. The conclusion of the study showed that using a combination of digital breast tomosynthesis (3D mammography) and full field digital mammography (FFDM) for breast cancer screening helps to detect smaller cancers and more architectural distortion, which can be very difficult to be seen in FFDM alone.

With locations in Williamsville, West Amherst, Buffalo, Lancaster and Hamburg, women throughout Western New York have convenient access to this life saving technology. To schedule your annual mammogram at any of these locations, please call (716) 631-2500. The time you spend getting your mammogram is clearly time well spent.