



Quest Physician Update

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Transforming Healthcare-Together.

Dear Colleagues,

The updated breast cancer screening recommendations from The United States Preventive Services Task Force have stimulated a lot of discussion. Preventive care is important, it merits being a topic of national conversation.

The new USPSTF recommendation rolls back their 2002 update, when the age to begin screening was lowered to 40 from age 50. The new 2009 recommendation incorporates data from a Swedish study involving 70,000 women, a British trial involving over 160,000 women and the Breast Cancer Surveillance Consortium with over 600,000 women.

The Task Force used population modeling analyses done by six independent teams that were funded by the National Cancer Institute. Their conclusion is that the harms related to false positives, for women 40 to 49, do not support 'routine' screening. They also reaffirm that the harms of overtreatment in elderly women outweigh the benefits of screening past age 74.

The official recommendation states, "The USPSTF recommends against routine screening mammography in women, at average risk, in their 40s. The decision to start regular, biennial screening mammography before the age of 50 years should be an individual one and take into account patient context, including the patient's values regarding specific benefits and harms."

Women over 50 are recommended to have one screening mammogram every two years.

Dropping the word 'routine' is the big change for women in their 40s.

Breast cancer is a scary disease. As physicians, we want to do everything possible to help patients stay healthy. The science currently says this one is too close to call for women in their 40s. We need to help our patients make this decision one person at a time.

Quality Quest is committed to evidence-based care recommendations. We have a preventive care calculator on our website www.QualityQuest.org. Enter age and sex and the calculator will provide a list of recommended services with information on how often each is needed, and why. The calculator filters out unneeded preventive services. It is based on Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI) guidelines and is aligned with the current USPSTF recommendations.

Thank you for all you do to make patient care better and safer. Together, we will transform healthcare.

Respectfully,

Gail M. Amundson, MD, FACP