

Resources Available to Help Reduce Cost to Patients of Life-Saving Mammograms

Mammograms Save Lives

“Early detection through screening is our best defense against morbidity and mortality from breast and cervical cancers and precancers.”

— Julie L. Gerberding, MD, MPH, Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

In June 2004 the American Cancer Society published a study of over 72,000 women followed for 10 years, which found only 6 percent getting annual mammograms (“Mammographic Screening: Patterns of Use and Estimated Impact on Breast Carcinoma Survival,” abstract available at: www.interscience.wiley.com).

This shockingly low compliance with the generally accepted clinical recommendation of annual screening found women from underserved socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups, women without health insurance, and women who did not speak English had the lowest levels of screening.

In October 2000, access to care became easier with the enactment of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act.

This federal law, which earmarked \$1 billion to treat medically underserved women, gives states the option to provide medical assistance through Medicaid to eligible women who were screened through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP) and found to have breast or cervical cancer, including precancerous conditions.

The Medical Board strongly urges physicians to remind their female patients over 40 years of age to have annual mammograms.

For women for whom this presents a financial challenge, many resources are available. Please share the following information, as appropriate, with your staff and patients:

- Department of Health Services’ Cancer Detection Program - Every Woman Counts: (800) 511-2300
- “National Mammography Day,” designated by the American College of Radiology, is the third Friday of October. Many facilities offer free or reduced-cost mammograms on that day.
- Avon, a CDC partner, makes available about \$5 million every year to help community-based organizations recruit women for breast cancer screening. Through the Avon-CDC Foundation Mobile Access Program, a grant of more than \$4 million funds at least four mammography vans to expand services for medically underserved women through NBCCEDP. To learn more, contact the CDC at (888) 842-6355.
- The Breast Cancer Early Detection Program (BCEDP) is a state-funded program that offers free breast cancer screening services to women 40 and over who qualify. Women who qualify are referred to a local BCEDP provider in their area. Referrals are available in English and Spanish (800) 511-2300.
- San Diego State University, Cancer Clinical Services, Quality Assurance Project Web site (www.qap.sdsu.edu) is a resource for primary care clinicians and other healthcare providers involved in the early detection and diagnosis of breast and cervical cancers. The Web site features continuing medical education materials, professional education resources, and clinical tools.
- The Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) is a federal program and is funded through the CDC to provide free mammograms and pap tests to eligible women. The program’s first priority is reaching women 40 and older. To learn more about the program, contact the CDC at (888) 842-6355.

