Mammograms Benefit Women Age 75 And Older

This age group accounted for 16 percent of all patients diagnosed with screening-detected cancers in a recent study.

November 30, 2018 By Alicia Green

A new study presented at the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) 2018 meeting suggests that women age 75 years and older should continue to undergo screening mammograms because of the high incidence of breast cancer among this cohort, reports RSNA. The study demonstrates that there is indeed value in screening women over 75—despite conflicting opinions among experts about when women should cease undergoing such exams.

Researchers analyzed data from 763,256 screening mammography exams at Elizabeth Wende Breast Care in Rochester, New York, between 2007 and 2017 and found that screening-detected cancer was diagnosed in 3,944 patients.

About 10 percent (76,885) of patients in the study were 75 years and older. Scientists identified 645 cancerous growths in 616 patients in this age group, a rate of 8.4 detections per 1,000 exams.

“For the relatively small percentage of our screening population that was compromised of women 75 and older, the patients diagnosed in this population made up 16 percent of all patients diagnosed with screening-detected cancers,” said Stamatia V. Destounis, MD, radiologist at Elizabeth Wende Breast Care.

Other findings included:

- 82 percent of malignancies diagnosed were invasive cancers, with 63 percent being grade 2 or 3;
- 98 percent of cancers were able to be treated surgically;
- In 7 percent of patients, positive lymph nodes were found at surgical excision;
- 17 cancers were unable to be treated surgically because of the patient’s age or state of health.

According to Destounis, women over age 75 should continue routine screenings even if they are in relatively good health because “the benefits of screening yearly after age 75 continue to outweigh
any minimal risk of additional diagnostic testing."

Click here to learn about new breast cancer screening strategies for higher-risk women.