

Breast Cancer Patients May Be Receiving Radiation For Longer Than Necessary.

[NBC Nightly News](#) (12/10, story 5, 1:00, Williams) reported on a [study](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association finding that “two-thirds of patients” with breast cancer “are getting radiation treatment for twice as long as they actually need and it’s causing patients to be unnecessarily inconvenienced and it’s a lot more expensive.” NBC’s Synderman explained that instead of five to seven weeks of radiation therapy, “a higher dose of radiation for only three to five weeks is just as good at preventing cancer occurrence.” NBC concluded, “the reason...is that it can take years for doctors especially to change established medical practices.”

[ABC World News](#) (12/10, story 8, 0:25, Muir) reported on the study, adding, “Authorities are now recommending you check with your doctor.”

[USA Today](#) (12/10, Szabo) reports that despite the findings, “few doctors are changing their practice,” and the five-week schedule “can be impossibly demanding for rural women who live far from a hospital, women who can’t take time off work and women who have small children.” Overall, just 35 percent of women over 50 are receiving the shorter course.

The [New York Times](#) (12/11, A23, Kolata, Subscription Publication) reports that “four rigorous studies” support the shorter course. It also explains that the course of radiation “reduces the odds that another cancer will arise in the breast, and it improves the chances of survival.” It further notes that while just 35 percent in the US received the shorter course, “at least two-thirds” of women in Canada and the UK were given the shorter course of radiation. Physicians are said to have been “drilled” in the need for longer-term, lower dose radiation in order to prevent scarring of the breast tissue, under earlier equipment, but with the equipment being used now that is no longer the case.

[NPR](#) (12/11, Shute) reports in its “Shots” blog that radiation oncologists may be reluctant to change because they “will make less money.” Faster adoption of the shorter course in other countries is attributed to a shortage of radiation facilities.

[US News & World Report](#) (12/10, Leonard) in its “Data Mine” blog, [HealthDay](#) (12/10, Preidt), and [Vox](#) (12/10, Kliff) offer similar reports as does [Reuters](#) (12/11, Rapaport) and [NBC News](#) (12/11) on its website. [TIME](#) (12/11, Park) notes that the study was supported by the Anthem insurance company.