



**Insurance and Real Estate & Public Health Committees
Joint Informational Hearing on Breast Cancer
December 18, 2009
American Cancer Society Testimony**

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American Cancer Society Mammography Guidelines Remain Unchanged

Good morning. My name is Dr. Andrew Salner. I am the Director of the Helen and Harry Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital. I am the Past-Chair, American Cancer Society, New England Division. I am also Chair of the Connecticut Cancer Partnership, a public and private coalition of over 300 cancer experts and health care organizations funded by a grant from the CDC to create and implement a Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan here in Connecticut. Today, I am speaking on behalf of the American Cancer Society

- Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in women ages 40 to 49, with more than 4,000 deaths expected in this age group this year. We know that breast cancer screening saves lives and that too few Americans are currently being screened.
- Ensuring coverage for all cancer screening tests is an integral part of access to early detection and effective treatment, and we would not want to jeopardize the availability of these services for the people of Connecticut.
- The Society regularly reviews the latest scientific evidence and publishes cancer screening guidelines for patients and health care providers. Based on those reviews, the Society recommends annual screening using mammography for average-risk women beginning at the age 40 and routine clinical breast exams beginning at age 20.

American Cancer Society Guidelines on Breast Cancer Screening for Average-Risk Women

- Yearly mammograms are recommended starting at age 40 and continuing for as long as a woman is in good health.
 - Clinical breast exam (CBE) should be part of a periodic health exam, about every 3 years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women 40 and over.
 - Women should know how their breasts normally feel and report any breast change promptly to their health care providers. Breast self-exam (BSE) is an option for women starting in their 20s.
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- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's (USPSTF) recent announcement that it is changing its breast cancer screening guidelines and recommending against routine mammograms for women aged 40-49 has rightfully caused a lot of concern and confusion.

- *The Society evaluated the same evidence as USPSTF but reached a different conclusion, finding no reason to change a recommendation that is scientifically based and has proven effective in reducing death rates for breast cancer in all age groups, including women ages 40-49.*
- Since 1990, deaths from breast cancer have declined 2.3% per year for all women, and 3.3% per year for women age 40-50.
- The total impact in lives saved over these last 19 years has been significant, and cannot be ignored. This is especially true when considering that the death rate was absolutely stable for the preceding six decades. Early detection and better treatments are responsible for that improvement.
- The American Cancer Society is committed to saving lives from breast cancer through research, education and advocacy, including providing services to cancer patients and their families and promoting evidence-based education about the importance of early detection. We will vigorously oppose any legislation that would weaken existing coverage mandates. We look forward to continuing to work with you to help improve Connecticut's cancer screening rates to reduce the breast cancer burden in our state.

Thank you.