

{**USE IN PITCH** As the Medical Director of the Mammography and Nuclear Medicine Departments at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center. }

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XRC Medical Imaging Critical of U.S. Panel's Mammogram Advice

Local imaging center continues to follow American Cancer Society guidelines

“The best tool that we have as physicians is still mammography.”

– Brett Stephens, M.D., Chief Mammographer, XRC Medical Imaging

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Controversial new mammography guidelines won't change the breast cancer screening approach at local imaging center XRC Medical Imaging (XRCMI).

The guidelines, recently issued by the government-sponsored U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommend against all commonly accepted routine breast cancer screening methods for average-risk women in their 40s, including mammography and breast self exams (BSE).

“The best tool that we have as physicians is still mammography,” emphasized XRCMI Chief Mammographer Brett Stephens, M.D. “Our group (X-Ray Consultants, Inc.) has always followed American Cancer Society recommendations and will continue to do so.”

For women aged 50 to 74, the USPSTF recommended mammograms every other year (instead of annually) and against screening beyond age 75. The American Cancer Society (ACS) has come out strongly against the task force recommendations.

Stephens said the ACS has looked at all the data used by the USPSTF, plus critical data the task force did not consider, and concluded that the benefits of starting mammography screening at age 40 still outweigh the risks. He also noted that not a single physician on the 16-member government-sponsored review panel is an oncologist — a doctor specializing in cancer.

Stephens observed that while debate over when exactly to start mammograms is not unusual, the task force recommendation against teaching BSEs is impossible to explain.

“It was ludicrous,” said Stephens. “A monthly breast self exam is simple, non-invasive, and costs nothing — it's common sense.”

Stephens further warned that the panel's guidelines threaten decades of progress made in the fight against breast cancer.

“The biggest danger of a report such as this is if insurance companies start refusing to pay for mammograms in younger-age women,” said Stephens.

Stephens urged women who are confused about the new guidelines to talk to their doctor, use common sense and decide if mammography is appropriate based on their age, family history and other risk factors.

About XRC Medical Imaging

XRC Medical Imaging, LLC (XRCMI), is a division of X-Ray Consultants, Inc., a private radiology practice consisting of 16 radiologists. X-Ray Consultants has practiced in the Michiana area for over 50 years, providing professional radiology services to regional hospitals. XRCMI is a modern, freestanding, multi-modality imaging center located at the Foundation Center at State Road 23 and Douglas and is a joint venture between X-Ray Consultants, Inc. and St. Joseph Regional Medical Center. We constantly emphasize customer service and warm, friendly patient-caregiver interactions to complement the clinical side of our business as measured through our Continuous Quality Improvement Program. For more information, call us at 574-243-0100 or visit www.xrcmi.com.

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