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PA BREAST CANCER COALITION OPPOSES LATEST U.S. PREVENTIVE SERVICES TASK FORCE MAMMOGRAPHY GUIDELINES

Pennsylvania breast cancer organization considers age 40 best age to begin annual mammograms

PENNSYLVANIA – The PA Breast Cancer Coalition (PBCC) strongly opposes the latest mammography guidelines set forth by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. The Task Force again recommended mammograms beginning at age 50 for women. In addition, the Task Force considers the decision to have mammograms between the ages of 40 and 49 “an individual one” despite listing mammograms for that age group as a screening tool that “may reduce the risk for breast cancer death.”

“This shift from age 40 to 50 could delay the early detection of breast cancer for thousands of women. The PBCC strongly disagrees with the latest guidelines from the U. S. Preventive Services Task Force. Their announcement serves as yet another cause for confusion for women across the nation,” said **PA Breast Cancer Coalition President and Founder Pat Halpin-Murphy**. “An additional concern with the Task Force’s shift in screening age is the possibility that insurance companies will use the guidelines as an opportunity to eliminate free mammograms for insured women. We cannot and will not let that happen.”

The Task Force has not taken into consideration the new 3D mammogram (tomosynthesis) which is more effective in finding breast cancer and reduces false positives by 27 percent.

This week’s announcement comes just three months after a smaller change in breast cancer screening guidelines from the American Cancer Society (ACS) which suggests that women receive annual mammograms beginning at age 45. The PBCC reached out to the ACS to clarify the guidelines. The Coalition received a letter in response from **American Cancer Society Chief Cancer Control Officer Dr. Richard Wender** in which he stated, “The guideline is aimed at maximizing mammography’s ability to save lives from breast cancer while minimizing the harms from false positives, additional testing, and potential over diagnosis. In consultation with her doctor, a woman should have the information and access to care to make the most informed decision about her health care options.” He reinforced, “**Because the ultimate decision as to when to begin mammography appropriately rests with the woman and her doctor, we continue to believe strongly that women of any age beginning at 40 should have access to annual mammograms without cost-sharing.**”

The PA Breast Cancer Coalition calls on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force to reconsider its mammography guidelines, to clarify the recommendations for women ages 40 to 49 and to reevaluate its findings in light of the increased effectiveness of 3D mammograms both in terms of early detection and reducing false positives. Mammograms are a proven screening tool in the early detection of breast cancer. The PBCC continues to recommend annual mammogram screenings for all women beginning at age 40.

About the PA Breast Cancer Coalition

The PBCC represents, supports and serves breast cancer survivors and their families in Pennsylvania through educational programming, legislative advocacy and breast cancer research grants. The PBCC is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to *finding a cure now...so our daughters won't have to*. For more information, please call 800-377-8828 or visit www.PABreastCancer.org.

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