

Targeted Outreach Efforts Needed to Tackle Decline in Screening Mammogram Rates



According to new data out of Brigham and Women's Hospital, the overall volume of screening mammograms has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, even after more than two years since the COVID-19 shutdown.

The team analysed screening mammogram volumes before and after a state-mandated COVID-19 shutdown. They observed screening trends in 2020 during the shutdown and afterwards up until 2022.

The results revealed there was a steady increase of 65 screening mammograms per month observed between October 2016 and March 2020. However, beginning in June 2021, the group detected a persistent decrease of five screenings per month.

Unfortunately, some patients were more affected than others; the decline was observed in every age category below 70, and the decline was mostly observed in women who had at least one risk factor of severe COVID.

The data reflects that the decline in screening volume especially affected individuals with risk factors for severe COVID-19. The team observed significantly different trends between two subgroups, as the fear of contracting the virus outweighs the fear of a breast cancer diagnosis.

In addition, patients may have perceived the hospital as unsafe. As a result, the findings highlighted that outpatient clinic screenings increased from 35.8% before COVID to nearly under 45% in the following years. It may be that patients felt safe in an outpatient setting where COVID patients were not being treated.

The findings highlight the need to identify opportunities to improve screening rates.

Researchers suggest that one potential solution to encourage patients to return for their annual mammogram is to expand the operating hours at hospitals' outpatient imaging facilities.

Furthermore, target outreach efforts and clear communication are needed to ensure to patients that the clinical environment is safe.

Source: [ScienceDirect](#)

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