

Introduction

This issue of *Breast Disease*, focused on breast imaging, covers of a large number of quite disparate topics, affecting both public health and clinical practice.

The first section, consisting of five papers, broadly covers strategies for improving patient knowledge, use and access to screening mammography and how radiologists and mammography technologists can best serve the needs of the public. The first paper, by Sadler and Fullerton, addresses how frequently inaccessible populations can be reached to improve their access to breast cancer screening services. Moyer and colleagues detail an exciting educational program for mammography technologists that has trained these professionals to transform the mammography experience into a “teachable moment” regarding breast cancer screening. Kinsinger and Harris describe how primary care physicians can help a woman in her forties decide whether screening for breast cancer suits her own value systems, that is, whether the potential mortality benefit justifies the risk of a false positive for her as an individual. Sadler’s second paper discusses strategies for involving older women in a particular mammography research trial, an important topic given the frequency of breast cancer in that population. Completing the papers with a public health focus, Huang and colleagues describe the current status of breast cancer screening in Taiwan and China, giving a cross-cultural viewpoint that is quite interesting and broadening for those of us who usually tend to view these issues through somewhat myopic North American eyes.

The second section, consisting of eight papers, addresses recent technical advances in the diagnosis and staging of breast cancer. Liberman and Kaplan evaluate the cost-effectiveness of standard percutaneous core biopsy for nonpalpable breast lesions. Gregory and Rebner critically evaluate the role of very large core needle biopsies for these cases. Harms explores the more controversial topic of percutaneous ablation of breast lesions. Ollila and Rager critically review the literature on lymph node mapping and sentinel lymphadenectomy for patients with breast cancer, a technology that is rapidly replacing more extensive nodal dissection in most women without axillary metastases. Stomper reviews how the currently available imaging methods assess extent of disease in women with breast cancer. Birdwell and Wilcox discuss the effect of federal regulation on the quality and cost of mammography in everyday clinical practice. Conant and Maidment provide an up-to-date review of digital mammography, a promising new technology that might supplant traditional mammography in the detection of breast cancer and the diagnosis of breast lesions. The volume ends with my own paper on the American College of Radiology Imaging Network trials in breast imaging and discusses how this new cooperative group will offer a means to assess new imaging technologies more rapidly than had been possible previously.

This volume certainly covers an extensive list of topics of interest to scholars in a broad range of disciplines. I hope you readers learn as much from these experts as I have in preparing this issue.

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