



# SPOTLIGHT on Massachusetts Information for Primary Care Physicians

## Breast Cancer & Mammography

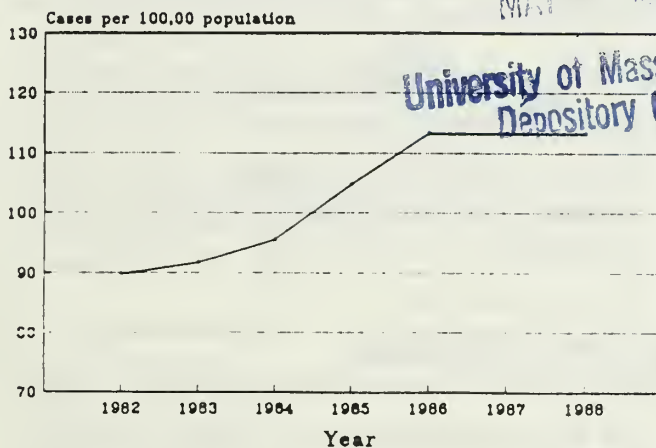
### Incidence in Massachusetts

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women.
- 27,837 new cases were reported in the state from 1982 through 1988, accounting for 30.1% of all cancers newly diagnosed in women.
- In 1989, 1,214 women in Massachusetts died from breast cancer.

- have a family history of breast cancer,
- have had breast cancer before,
- begin menopause at a late age (more than 55 years old),
- have had their first child at a late age (more than 30 years old), and
- are 30 years old and have never had a child

- However, 50-75% of breast cancer cases continue to occur in women without any of the known risk factors.

Figure 1.  
Breast Cancer in Females  
Trend in Massachusetts



Rates are age-adjusted to the 1970 U.S. standard population  
Source: Bureau of Health Statistics

### Risk Factors

- Approximately 1 in 9 women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. Of these women, 1 in 3 will die from this disease.
- Some women are at higher risk for developing breast cancer than others. These are women who:

### Early Recognition And Survival

- Very high (five, eight and ten year) survival rates were observed in women with breast cancer who were diagnosed through the Breast Cancer Detection Demonstration Project from 1973 to 1985. The American Cancer Society concluded that early detection of breast cancer is effective for women in their 40s and older.

### Massachusetts Physician Survey

- A majority of Massachusetts physicians surveyed reported that they always recommend mammography to their patients over 40 years of age.
- 29% of Massachusetts physicians surveyed reported that their patients frequently request mammograms; 47% reported that their patients sometimes request them.
- According to 69% of Massachusetts physicians surveyed, requests for mammography have increased among their patients over the past five years.

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## Mammography Use Among Massachusetts Women

- Mammography has been shown to help in reducing breast cancer mortality. Nevertheless utilization is still relatively low.
- According to the 1988 Massachusetts Health Interview Survey, over one third of Massachusetts women over age 40 have never had a mammogram (Figure 2).
- Women with household incomes less than \$15,000 were less likely to have ever had a mammogram (Figure 3).

Figure 2.

Mammography Use Among Women 40 and Older, By Age

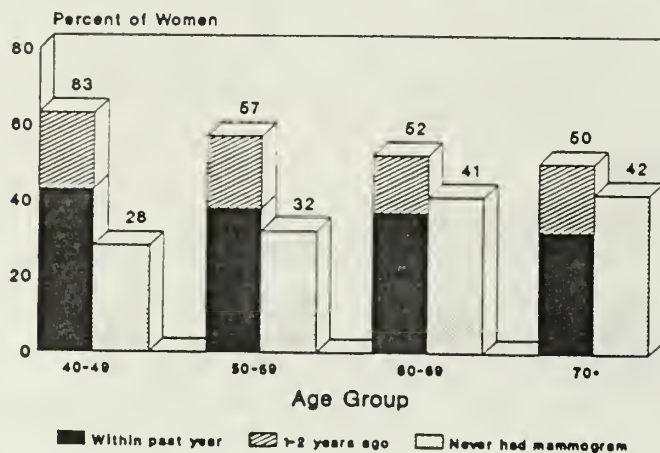
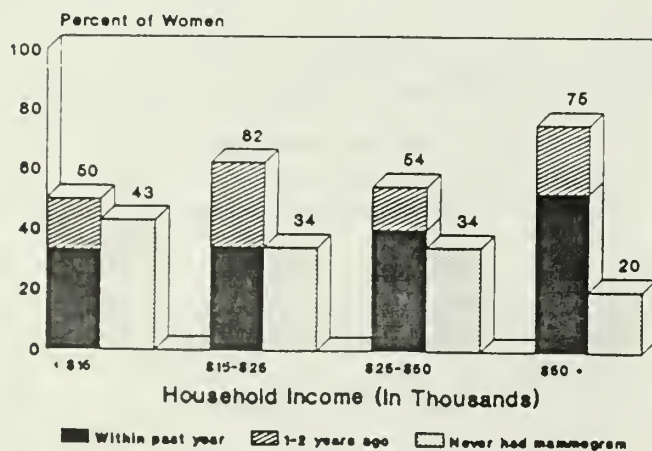


Figure 3.

Mammography Use Among Women 40 and Older, By Income



- The major reasons reported for not having had a mammogram were that they felt it was unnecessary (31%) and they had not received a recommendation from their doctor (25%).

- Cost has also been cited as a deterrent to mammography use. However, private insurers and HMOs now cover the cost of mammography screening in Massachusetts, and Medicare also covers mammography screening for the disabled and women 65 and older.

## Mammography Guidelines

For women who have had breast cancer:

- every year

For all other women:

- Baseline at age 35 to 39
- Every 1 to 2 years at age 40 to 49
- Every year at age 50 and over

## You Can Make The Difference

- Routinely order mammography as stated in guidelines.
- Teach patients to do monthly breast self-examinations. The American Cancer Society (ACS) will certify your office staff to do this.
- Perform clinical breast examinations on all female patients during periodic examinations.
- Distribute literature about early detection of breast cancer and mammography (free from the ACS and the National Cancer Institute).

## For Your Information

Call for free professional and patient education materials.

- American Cancer Society  
Massachusetts Division  
1-800-ACS-2345
- National Cancer Institute  
Cancer Information Service  
1-800-4-CANCER
- The Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health  
Cancer Control Program  
(617) 727-2662