

November 2009

RESPONSE TO THE UNITED STATES PREVENTIVE SERVICES TASK FORCE
Change in mammography guidelines

The Elliot Breast Health Center physicians agree with the American Society of Breast Surgeons statement as follows:

“We believe there is sufficient data to support annual mammography screening for women age 40 and older. We also believe the breast cancer survival rate of women between 40 and 50 will improve from the increased use of digital mammographic screening, which is superior to older plain film techniques in detecting breast cancer in that age group.

While we recognize that there will be a number of benign biopsies, we also recognize that mammography is the optimal screening tool for the early diagnosis of breast cancer in terms of cost-effectiveness, practical use, and accuracy. To restrict its use will mean that breast cancers will go undiagnosed for an unacceptable period of time. This restriction of mammographic screening defeats the goals of early detection, which often allows for breast conserving surgery and avoidance of chemotherapy.

Women in the age group of 75 and older are at the greatest risk for breast cancer and at the point where mammography is most sensitive.

We believe these recommendations effectively turn back the clock to pre-mammography days by making the diagnosis of breast cancer occur only when the tumor is large enough to be felt by a physical exam. The Society will continue to advocate for routine annual mammography screening for all women beginning at age 40. Mammography screening reduces breast cancer mortality and saves lives”.