

ON THE SPOT

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There has been much debate surrounding a recent study that suggests women should begin getting mammograms at age 50 rather than 40. What do you think?

In general, women in the 40 to 50 age group should have yearly mammograms, but need to discuss the issue with their physicians to make sure they are being treated properly based on their specific risk factors for cancer.

Do you think the new recommendation is a step in the right direction?

The recommendation outlines the fact that there are negative side effects to screening mammography.

What are the negative factors involved in having mammograms at age 40 rather than 50?

The unnecessary invasive biopsies and other procedures that women have to undergo is one of the negatives. The new recommendations should help people realize that mammograms aren't the end of cancer detection and treatment. We need better tests and better treatment.

Has the risk of breast cancer in women decreased in recent years?

Risk of breast cancer has not increased. Survival rates have improved: 70 percent of breast cancer cases are completely cured. But mammograms may not be playing a big role in the improvement that we are seeing.

How far away are we from finding a cure for cancer? I don't think we will ever find a cure. What we can do is minimize the negative effects of cancer on people's lives.