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Breast MRI Needed for High-Risk Patients

A pair of studies published online in *JAMA Internal Medicine* show that while more women at high risk for breast cancer are getting the recommended MRI breast screening, many more are not.

In a Group Health study, researchers found that the proportion of high-risk women who underwent breast MRI screening rose from 9 percent to 29 percent between 2005 and 2009.

The Harvard study found that only 21 percent of the women screened with breast MRI met the criteria for high risk set by the American Cancer Society. Those results mirror the breast MRI screening patterns in the Scottsdale area, says Denise Hartoin Reddy, MD, breast and women's imaging specialist at Scottsdale Medical Imaging (SMIL).

“In our practice, the majority of breast MRIs are performed on patients who already have a breast cancer diagnosis and in whom the extent of disease is being evaluated, which is an appropriate indication,” Reddy says. “Of the women who are being screened, however, some may fall into the intermediate risk category.”

Reddy says SMIL has been working with other providers in the community to improve the appropriate use of breast MRI screening. Recently SMIL launched a promotion of the National Cancer Institute's “Know Your Number” calculator on its website to help women understand their risk levels.

“We hope this tool will help identify high-risk women who may benefit from breast MRI screening and aid all women in understanding their personal breast cancer risk,” she says. While the awareness effort continues, Reddy says there are still too many high-risk women who are not being screened.

“We continue to take important steps towards a program of more targeted screening for our community that will ensure that all women get the breast cancer screening that is right for their risk level,” Reddy says.

References

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