Multistrategy health education program to increase mammography use among women ages 65 and older

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Purpose

• Mammography use decreases with age although the risk of breast cancer increases with age.

• Medicare coverage alone will not increase mammography use sufficiently.

• However, the addition of access enhancing and health education interventions boosts utilization dramatically.
Background

• Americans ages 65 and older are 10 times more likely to develop cancer than those under age 65.

• Nearly 50 percent of breast cancers occur in women older than 65.

• A number of international studies have shown that screening programs that include regular mammograms can reduce mortality from breast cancer by as much as 40 percent in women ages 50 and older.
Results

- Women identified several reasons for not having had mammograms, including:
  - not needed or not necessary
  - physician did not recommend
  - have not had any problems
  - have not thought about it
  - being older than 65
- A total of 167 women attended the educational presentations at four intervention sites:
  - 73 percent said it was very informative
  - 47 percent said it was very calming
  - 3 percent said it was very upsetting
  - 53 percent said the session very much made them want to have a mammogram
Suggestions

• Older women do not feel susceptible to breast cancer, so messages may need to heighten the salience of breast cancer for them.

• Health educators should seek to reduce the many barriers to mammography use—knowledge, belief, cost, access, and economic barriers.

• Strongest interventions are likely to be those that are directed at women, their physicians, and the health system.