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The Cancer Test that's a Death Trap...

Posted By [Dr. Mercola](#) | September 02 2010 | 76,285 views

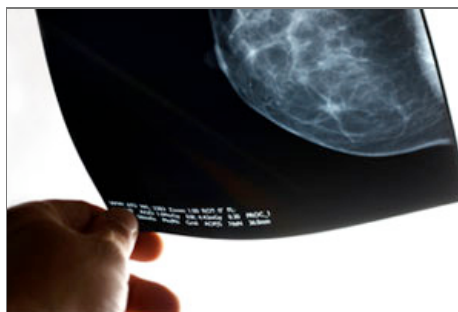
Dr. Samuel S. Epstein, chairman of the Cancer Prevention Coalition, warns that the American Cancer Society has close financial ties to the makers of mammography equipment. Five radiologists have served as presidents of the American Cancer Society (ACS).

In its every move, the ACS promotes the interests of the major manufacturers of mammogram machines and films, including Siemens, DuPont, General Electric, Eastman Kodak, and Piker.

This bias hypes mammography, which Dr. Epstein and Dr. Rosalie Bertell emphasize is an avoidable cause of breast cancer itself.

According to World Wire:

"Routine mammography delivers an unrecognized high dose of radiation, warn Drs. Epstein and Bertell. If a woman follows the current guidelines for premenopausal screening, over a 10 year period she would receive a total dosage of about 5 rads. This approximates the level of exposure to radiation of a Japanese woman one mile from the epicenter of atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima or Nagasaki."



Sources:

» [World Wire November 24, 2009](#)

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

There is no solid evidence that mammograms save lives. In fact, research demonstrates that adding an annual mammogram to a careful physical examination of the breasts does not improve breast cancer survival rates over getting the examination alone.

Yet, most physicians recommend mammograms to women as the go-to method of breast cancer screening, and the American Cancer Society advises women age 40 and older to have a screening mammogram every year, and continue to do so for as long as they are in good health.

This is a recommendation they kept, despite updated guidelines set forth by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which state that women in their 40s should NOT get routine mammograms for early detection of breast cancer!

So why is ACS so gung-ho on mammograms, despite a lack of strong evidence to back up their use?

American Cancer Society Has Financial Interests in Mammography

Dr. Epstein, M.D., professor emeritus of Environmental and Occupational Medicine at the University of Illinois School of Public Health, and chairman of the Cancer Prevention Coalition,

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TRANSLATE THIS PAGE:



has been speaking out about the risks of mammography since at least 1992. As for how these misguided mammography guidelines came about, Epstein says:

"They were conscious, chosen, politically expedient acts by a small group of people for the sake of their own power, prestige and financial gain, resulting in suffering and death for millions of women. They fit the classification of "crimes against humanity.""

And what better spokesperson to tout mammography's benefits than the American Cancer Society itself, an agency that is supposed to be devoted to preventing and curing cancer for the American public? But as Dr. Epstein points out, ACS' role in the promotion of mammography is far from altruistic, as the Society has numerous ties to the mammography industry itself:

- Five radiologists have served as presidents of ACS
- ACS commonly promotes the interests of mammogram machine and film manufacturers, including Siemens, DuPont, General Electric, Eastman Kodak and Piker

Dr. Epstein and Rosalie Bertell, Ph.D. of the International Physicians for Humanitarian Medicine stated:

"The mammography industry conducts research for the ACS and its grantees, serves on its advisory boards, and donates considerable funds.

DuPont also is a substantial backer of the ACS Breast Health Awareness Program; sponsors television shows and other media productions touting ACS literature for hospitals, clinics, medical organization, and doctors; produces educational films; and aggressively lobbies Congress for legislation promoting the nationwide availability of mammography services."

The close ties also help explain why ACS commonly runs advertisements urging women to get mammograms, even going so far in one ad as to promise that early detection leads to a cure "nearly 100 percent of the time."

But as World-Wire reported, an ACS communications director even admitted that the statement was not based on science, but marketing potential. She said:

"The ad isn't based on a study. When you make an advertisement, you just say what you can to get women in the door. You exaggerate a point ... Mammography today is a lucrative [and] highly competitive business."

Unfortunately, what the American Cancer Society is not making clear in their heavy mammography marketing material are the risks involved, some of which may actually raise a woman's risk of breast cancer.

Mammogram Risks You Probably Haven't Heard Of ...

A mammogram uses ionizing radiation at a relatively high dose, which in and of itself can contribute to the development of breast cancer. Mammograms expose your body to radiation that can be 1,000 times greater than that from a chest x-ray, which we know poses a cancer risk.

According to Epstein and Bertell in World-Wire:

"If a woman follows the current guidelines for premenopausal screening, over a 10 year period she would receive a total dosage of about 5 rads. This approximates the level of exposure to radiation of a Japanese woman one mile from the epicenter of atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima or Nagasaki."

Interestingly, in a study by Dr. Robert M. Kaplan, the chairman of the department of health services at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Los Angeles, and colleagues, they found 22 percent more invasive breast tumors in the group who had mammograms every two years compared to the group who had just one mammogram over a six-year period.

Could it be that the mammograms themselves contributed to these results?

I would certainly not discount it, or the fact that mammography also compresses your breasts tightly, which could lead to a dangerous spread of cancerous cells, should they exist.

False Positives Alarmingly Common

Mammograms carry a first-time false positive rate of up to 6 percent. False positives can lead to expensive repeat screenings, exposing you to even more radiation, and may result in unnecessary invasive procedures including biopsies, unnecessary surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and more.



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Should you end up getting a breast biopsy, that too can have detrimental consequences.

Needle biopsies, which are widely used, may accidentally cause malignant cells to break away from a tumor, allowing it to spread to other areas of your body. And according to a study from the John Wayne Cancer Institute, it appears that a needle biopsy may increase the spread of cancer by 50 percent compared to patients who received excisional biopsies, also known as lumpectomies.

So a false positive on a mammogram, or worse, a false diagnosis, can really be damaging.

Is There a Safe Screening Option?

The revised U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations discourage doctors from teaching breast self-examination (BSE), even though they have long been recommended as a simple way for women to keep track of anything unusual in their breasts.

While BSEs are certainly not inherently harmful, the problem they pose is that it typically forces women into a conventional, and potentially dangerous, diagnostic model, as if you do find something unusual, you will typically be brought in for a mammogram for further screening.

There is a safe option for breast screening that you may not have heard of because it is not financially tied to ACS or other public health agencies.

It's called thermographic breast screening, and works by measuring the radiation of infrared heat from your body and translating this information into anatomical images. Thermography uses no mechanical pressure or ionizing radiation.

Thermography is able to detect the possibility of breast cancer much earlier.

It can detect the potential for cancer because it can image the early stages of angiogenesis -- the formation of a direct supply of blood to cancer cells, which is a necessary step before they can grow into tumors of size.

Breast Cancer Prevention Tips

It's sad to note that while the American Cancer Society widely encourages women to get mammograms, they do not do nearly enough to spread the word about the many ways women can help prevent breast cancer in the first place.

A healthy diet, regular physical exercise, and an effective way to manage your emotional health are the cornerstones of just about any cancer prevention program, including breast cancer.

But for breast cancer, specifically, you can take it a step further by also watching out for excessive iron levels. This is actually very common once women stop menstruating. The extra iron actually works as a powerful oxidant, increasing free radicals and raising your risk of cancer.

So if you are a post-menopausal woman or have breast cancer you will certainly want to have your Ferritin level drawn. Ferritin is the iron transport protein and should not be above 80. If it is elevated you can simply donate your blood to reduce it.

The following lifestyle strategies will also help to further lower your risk:

- Optimize your vitamin D level. Ideally it should be over 50 ng/ml, but levels from 60-80 ng/ml will radically reduce your cancer risk. Safe sun exposure is the least expensive and most effective way to increase your levels, followed by safe tanning beds and then oral vitamin D3 supplementation.
- Improve Your Insulin Receptor Sensitivity. The best way to do this is make sure you have an optimized exercise program. Most people need about five to eight hours of exercise every week to optimize their insulin receptors, but make sure you just don't do cardio. A varied program that includes the Peak Fitness exercises will give you the most benefits.
- Maintain a healthy body weight. This will come naturally when you begin eating right for your nutritional type and exercising. It's important to lose excess weight because estrogen, a hormone produced in fat tissue, may trigger breast cancer.
- Get plenty of high quality animal-based omega-3 fats, such as those from krill oil. Omega-3 deficiency is a common underlying factor for cancer.
- Avoid drinking alcohol, or limit your drinks to one a day for women.
- Breastfeed exclusively for up to six months. Research shows this will reduce your breast cancer risk.

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