

Higher Volume Mammography Centres Better for Screening



New research suggests that women are more likely to benefit from mammography screening if this is done at facilities with higher total interpretive volumes. Researchers point out that these higher volume facilities are significantly more likely to diagnose invasive tumours with good prognoses. Their findings are published in the *Journal of Medical Screening*.

The study "addresses an important gap in evidence that informs whether facility volume is associated with good screening outcomes for women — such as finding more early invasive tumours rather than advanced, which helps reduce the likelihood of dying from breast cancer or having more intensive treatment," says first author Tracy Onega, PhD, a principal investigator at Dartmouth's Norris Cotton Cancer Center.

It's important for facility-level mammography quality monitoring to focus on tumour characteristics, according to Dr. Onega, considering that a recommended average of 2,000 mammograms annually may be achievable now that most facilities use digital mammography, enabling small facilities to send their mammograms to be interpreted by larger facilities.

"Studies to isolate the mechanism by which volume affects quality may guide interventions to achieve similar performance gains among smaller volume facilities," explains Dr. Onega, who is an associate professor at The Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice. "Also, we've now laid the foundation to study the volume benchmarks in a more granular way before this could translate directly into policy and practice changes."

Dr. Onega's research benefitted from women and facility participants in the New Hampshire Mammography Network (NHMN) and the NH State Cancer Registry, in addition to Dr. Robert A. Smith — a cancer epidemiologist and Senior Director, Cancer Control at the National Office of the American Cancer Society. The study was also supported by the American Cancer Society (made possible by a generous donation from the Longaberger Company's Horizon of Hope Campaign), the Breast Cancer Stamp Fund, and the National Cancer Institute Breast Cancer Surveillance Consortium.

Source: [Norris Cotton Cancer Center Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center](#)

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