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## Women want mammogram results promptly



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[Virginia Commonwealth University \(VCU\) Health System](#) conducted a survey study to understand preferences of female patients regarding what **method** and **how quickly** they want to be given **screening mammogram results**. Researchers found the majority of patients preferred to wait for mammogram results at the time of the appointment (i.e., same day) or to receive their results within 48 hours. A telephone call was the first method of contact that patients preferred when receiving news of screening mammogram results.

In the U.S., a federal law of the [Mammography Quality Standards Act \(MQSA\)](#) mandates each mammography facility send a report in lay language summarising the examination results to all patients within **30 days after the mammogram examination**. Unfortunately, results are not always promptly communicated to patients by referring physicians. **This delay in communication can be detrimental to patient health and the final outcome.**

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The issue of **communicating these results immediately** and directly to patients has been of increasing interest to **radiologists** in recent years. Little published data exist on patient preferences regarding what method and how quickly patients would prefer to receive their imaging results.

For this study, survey questions were created to better understand patient preferences regarding the time to receive screening mammogram results; whether they prefer to receive news of **abnormal screening mammogram results** on a Friday when their **follow-up appointment** could not be scheduled until the next week; and how patients wish to be contacted with their screening mammogram results.

The population studied was female patients 18 years or older that came in for a screening mammogram during the study period (21 August 2017 to 9 November 2017) at VCU's two academic breast imaging centres. An anonymous paper survey was given to each participant by the patient access representative (PAR) at the time of check-in. Patients were instructed by the PAR to turn in their completed survey to a lock box located near the PAR desk before they leave the breast imaging centre.

There were **2,245 patients** who participated in the survey. A majority of patients preferred to receive screening mammogram results on Friday (n = 1,868, 85.4%), even if their mammogram was abnormal, requiring a follow-up appointment that could not be scheduled until the following week. Most individuals preferred to schedule their follow-up appointments soon after their initial appointment, preferring either the next day or within 1 to 2 days. Finally, over half of the sample preferred to be contacted via a telephone call, with letter and text messaging being the next most preferred methods and e-mail being the least preferred.

**According to the VCU researchers, patients' preference to receive abnormal screening mammogram results on Friday, even though the breast centres are closed over the weekend, dismisses the false belief that patients do not want to be made aware of their results due to stress over the weekend.** This has led to a discussion in VCU clinical practice in providing abnormal screening mammogram results on Friday.

The findings are limited partly by the study's qualitative methodology. The survey participants are from one city and therefore results may not be generalisable to a broader population. Although there were limitations to this study, they do not undermine **that fact that patients prefer to receive screening mammogram results quickly with little wait time for a follow-up appointment for workup of an abnormal screening mammogram finding.**

Source: [Journal of the American College of Radiology](#), [Virginia Commonwealth University \(VCU\) Health System](#), [Mammography Quality Standards Act \(MQSA\)](#)

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Published on : Wed, 20 Feb 2019