

NATIONAL SURVEY SHOWS 95% OF WOMEN DO NOT KNOW THEIR BREAST DENSITY DESPITE INCREASED CANCER RISK

Conducted by Harris Interactive, the U-Systems Survey Also Shows that Doctors Have Spoken to Less than 1 in 10 Women About the Impact of Breast Density on Early Detection

NEW YORK, May 20, 2010 - A national survey of U.S. women ages 40 and older revealed good news and bad news about women's overall knowledge of breast health and how to reduce their risk of cancer. Seventy-four percent indicated they have had a mammogram with 66 percent indicating they get mammograms on a regular basis. That's the good news in the face of concerns that controversial breast screening guidelines issued by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force would discourage women from getting regular mammograms. The bad news is that 95 percent of women ages 40+ do not know their breast density and nearly 90 percent did not know it increases the risk of developing breast cancer.

Compounding the issue was the fact that doctors have spoken to less than one in 10 women ages 40+ (9%) about breast density. The low awareness of breast density and the fact that doctors are not talking to patients about its link to increased cancer risk is particularly troublesome to breast cancer survivor turned advocate Nancy M. Cappello, Ph.D., founder of Are You Dense, (www.areyoudense.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to informing the public about dense breast tissue.

"Prior to finding out I had advanced breast cancer, I had annual mammograms, I ate healthy and exercised, and didn't have a first-degree relative with breast cancer. But I didn't have all the information I needed," said Cappello. "What I didn't know was that I have dense breast tissue and like two-thirds of pre-menopausal women and one quarter of post menopausal women, I have a much lower chance of having breast cancer detected by a mammogram. The survey underscores the need for women to have more information about their risk and what they can do to find cancer at its earliest stage when it is most treatable."

The national survey of 599 adult women ages 40 and older was conducted online from April 28-30, 2010, by Harris Interactive®, a global market research and consulting firm. It was commissioned by U-Systems, the leader in developing automated breast ultrasound systems and the sponsor of the SOMO•INSIGHT study, a nationwide multi-center clinical study designed to evaluate whether digital mammography in combination with the Automated Breast Ultrasound System is more accurate than a routine screening mammogram alone in detecting breast cancer in women with dense breast tissue.

A growing body of research demonstrates a strong link between breast density and increased cancer risk of 4-6 times. One study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine (356:227-236), showed 35 percent of breast cancer goes undetected by mammography in women with dense breasts as density masks appearance of tumors. Since both dense breast tissue and cancer appear white on a mammogram, it is difficult to detect cancer when there is a lot of dense breast tissue. Analogous to looking for a specific cloud in a cloudy sky, as breast density goes up, the accuracy of the mammogram goes down.

Rachel Brem, MD, SOMO•INSIGHT principal investigator, and professor of radiology, Breast Imaging and Interventional Center, George Washington University Medical Faculty Associates in Washington DC agrees that while breast density is a major health issue, there is good news out there as well.

"Mammography is an effective modality for screening for breast cancer and women aged 40 and above should have annual screening mammograms. However in women with dense breasts, the breast density can obscure a cancer. This is particularly problematic as women with dense breasts have an increased risk of breast cancer. Therefore, we need additional approaches to improving breast cancer detection in women with dense breasts.

“Several studies have shown that for women with dense breast tissue, supplementing mammograms with ultrasound can increase detection from 48 to 97 percent. While ultrasound is a proven tool throughout the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer, it has not typically been used during the screening process. Establishing a solid scientific basis for the use of breast ultrasound as a cancer screening tool in certain populations, like women with dense breasts, is one of the primary reasons we’re conducting the SOMO•INSIGHT study,” added Dr. Brem.

When asked whether they would consider having an ultrasound exam or other additional imaging testing if they had increased breast density, nearly one-third (32%) of women ages 40+ indicated they would. Despite the fact that only five percent of women ages 40+ knew their own breast density prior to the survey, a significant number indicated that it is important for women over 40 to know what their breast density (26%) and want to know their own breast density (23%).

To help women learn more about breast density and gather information for conversations about their breast health with their doctors, U-Systems also announced the launch of a dedicated web site for the SOMO•INSIGHT Study. Offering detailed information on the study, participation guidelines and an online eligibility quiz, the SOMO•INSIGHT web page also provides detailed background on breast density and Automated Breast Ultrasound. For more information and a list of participating clinical sites, call 866-364-6777 or visit <http://www.somoinsightstudy.org>.

About U-Systems

U-Systems is the leader in developing automated breast ultrasound systems and the sponsor of the SOMO•INSIGHT multi-center study that will enroll up to 20,000 women at clinical study sites in the United States to determine the sensitivity of mammography and somo•v Automated Breast Ultrasound Systems (ABUS) together, compared to mammography alone for women with greater than fifty percent dense breast tissue. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.u-systems.com>.

Harris Study Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of U-Systems from April 28-30, 2010 among 599 adult women ages 40 and older. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables, please contact May Calceta at 866-364-6777.

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