



PRESS RELEASE

Cancer Does Not Stop for COVID!

"In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Radiologists are urging health centres across the country to maintain breast screening throughout the pandemic and are encouraging patients not to forgo their mammography exams"

Ottawa, October 23, 2020 – Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among Canadian women. Although now more than ever people are surviving breast cancer, early detection through screening is vital. Making healthy lifestyle choices can help reduce the risk, however, the reality is there are other factors such as family history that can impact the onset of cancer. For Canadian women this is especially true with breast cancer.

"One in eight women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. Considering these odds, women should take an active role in their health, said Dr. Jean Seely, President of the Canadian Society of Breast Imaging, Head of Breast Imaging at the Ottawa Hospital and Regional Breast Imaging Lead, Ontario Screening Program. The Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR) and the Canadian Society of Breast Imaging (CSBI) recommend that **women 40 and older have an annual screening exam**. This can help with early detection of disease and improve overall patient outcomes.

During the first wave of the pandemic annual mammography exams were brought to a halt. Thousands of non-urgent procedures were postponed due to safety concerns, minimizing the further spread of COVID. "The world was not ready for the magnitude of this global health crisis. Fast forward six months later and, we are in a much better position to deal with the situation. The Public Health Agency of Canada has put protocols in place to keep patients safe, said Seely".

Even before the pandemic outbreak wait times for medical imaging in Canada far exceeded the acceptable 30-day standard. ([Value of Radiology Report, Part II](#), 2019). Many patients who were waiting for breast examinations will now have to wait twice as long. "This is an issue for women 40 and older, especially those who are at risk for breast cancer. If Canada were to scale back medical imaging procedures in this second wave, the consequences would be dire for Canadian women, said Seely."

Dr. Seely describes an instance of a patient diagnosed with high grade breast cancer in March 2020, "the patient was scheduled to undergo surgery four weeks post-diagnosis, however, due to COVID-19 the surgery was postponed for an undetermined amount of time. The patient had to endure another biopsy to see if they were

eligible for chemotherapy while they wait for this lifesaving surgery. The chances of a full recovery are significantly reduced the longer they wait. Delaying a diagnosis of breast cancer for more than 6 months leads to loss of more lives to breast cancer. There are many Canadian patients in similar situations across the country. We need to act now,” said Dr. Seely.

Dr. Seely stressed the importance of patients showing up for their appointments. “When detected early there is a 98% survival rate for localized breast cancer. Patients can schedule a mammogram through self referral to a provincial screening program or through their family doctor.”

The CAR recently published a report: [Radiology Resilience Now and Beyond](#), offering a series of recommendations to improve access to medical imaging for Canadians. The intent is to work with the Federal government to develop a plan for the sustainability of radiology now and in the future. The goal is to improve patient outcomes throughout and after the pandemic and to save lives.

Read the full [Radiology Resilience Now and Beyond report](#) found on [car.ca](#).

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