SBI and ACR Commends Arguments in Opposition of Mammography Based on Faulty Science

Washington D.C. – The Society of Breast Imaging and the American College of Radiology support the arguments in the article, “Arguments Against Mammography Screening Continue to Be Based on Faulty Science,” recently published online in The Oncologist. In the article, the author Dr. Daniel Kopans, a professor of radiology at Harvard Medical School, dissects a number of articles published in the medical literature that he clearly shows, incorrectly, suggest that mammography has had little or no effect on breast cancer death rates.

In the article Dr. Kopans states his case for why such arguments are based on faulty science. He specifically analyzes a New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) article saying, “The analysis used in this paper is fundamentally flawed, and the conclusions are not scientifically supported. Nevertheless, using the authors’ methods but with more accurate extrapolation, there is no evidence of overdiagnosis of invasive breast cancer. Contrary to their assertion, the rate of late stage cancer has dropped dramatically. The paper’s methods are questionable, and the conclusions are incorrect. The paper should be withdrawn by the New England Journal of Medicine.”

This article brings to light the controversy and disagreement in the medical community on the benefits of mammography. Although this disagreement has been around for decades it has intensified in recent years especially since the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force released its controversial recommendation in 2009. Dr. Kopans said, “Randomized controlled trials have shown conclusively that mortality rates among women decrease when screening begins at age 40. In addition, more than 40 percent of the years of life lost to breast cancer are among women diagnosed with breast cancer while in their 40s. There simply isn’t an evidence-based line of reasoning to delay the start of regular screenings.”

The Society of Breast Imaging, the American College of Radiology as well as other national breast cancer groups, and women’s health societies support annual screening beginning at the age of 40.

Dr. Kopans has raised disturbing questions about the validity of the NEJM paper. We believe that healthcare recommendations should be based on scientific evidence and not on estimates, extrapolations and guesses. The NEJM should carefully consider withdrawing this paper.

The article can be accessed HERE.

# # #

About the Society of Breast Imaging
The SBI is a professional medical organization dedicated to improving the practice of breast imaging and the quality of medical education in breast imaging. The SBI also provides a medium for the exchange of ideas among those involved in breast imaging. The SBI include among their membership the leading breast imaging specialists nationwide.

About the American College of Radiology
The American College of Radiology (ACR), founded in 1924, is one of the largest and most influential medical associations in the United States. The ACR devotes its resources to making imaging and radiation therapy safe, effective and accessible to those who need it. Its 36,000 members include radiologists, radiation oncologists, medical physicists, interventional radiologists and nuclear medicine physicians.