

Knowledge gaps about breast density revealed by an online continuing education course

Recently published study shows that important knowledge gaps exist regarding breast density, breast cancer risk assessment and breast cancer screening, reinforcing need for continuing education

The independent, not-for-profit organization DenseBreast-info.org, (DB-I) was set up to provide breast density information to both patients and health care professionals, and is cited as the most up-to-date and comprehensive resource of information on the topic of dense breasts. As a result of a collaborative effort of world-renowned breast imaging experts and medical reviewers, DB-I offers a medically-sourced educational tool which includes a *Risk Model Primer*.

The results of the first of two research studies recently conducted by DB-I have just been published [1]. The study, “*Radiologic Technologist and Radiologist Knowledge Gaps about Breast Density Revealed by an Online Continuing Education Course*”, was based on an analysis of post-test responses to DB-I’s CME/CE course, “*Breast Density: Why it Matters*” and identified provider knowledge gaps and their predictors.

The online CME/CE course includes a collection of pre-course demographic information, a monograph based on DB-I content, and a post-test to assess knowledge.

De-identified results of these tests from more than 1300 radiology technologists and more than 200 radiologists were evaluated.

The results showed that among radiologists and radiology technologists, important knowledge gaps exist regarding breast density, breast cancer risk assessment, and breast cancer screening :

Nearly half of surveyed physicians and technologists misunderstood the inverse relationship between increasing age and lifetime risk.

About one-third overestimated the ability of tomosynthesis to detect cancer as being nearly equal to MRI and also mistakenly thought that the Gail risk model should be used to determine if a woman is high risk for the purposes of recommending MRI or genetic testing.

About one-third of physicians and about half of technologists were unaware that screening MRI should be recommended for a 29-year-old woman with a family history of disease-causing BRCA1/2 mutation(s).

“These findings suggest that comprehensive, proper risk assessment and screening MRI in high-risk women may be under-utilized, which is consistent with findings from

previous studies. However, many of those studies were conducted in referring providers, who often rely on supplemental screening recommendations from radiologists to guide decisions. Therefore, addressing these knowledge gaps among radiologists is essential to ensure women receive adequate screening based on their personal risk profile,” said Robin Seitzman, PhD, MPH, Director of Education and Epidemiology Research, DenseBreast-info.org.

“Density notification will soon be the national standard in the USA, and cancers can remain hidden in dense breasts even when tomosynthesis is used. As a result, there has been a push to consider supplemental screening in women with dense breasts,” said Wendie Berg, MD, PhD, Professor of Radiology, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Magee-Womens Hospital, Department of Radiology and Chief Scientific Advisor, DenseBreast-info.org. *“Our study revealed major gaps in both radiologist and radiology technologists’ understanding of the efficacy of 3D mammography, or tomosynthesis, and current recommendations for MRI screening. Since radiologists routinely interface with patients and referring physicians to make appropriate screening recommendations, we need targeted, medically-sourced educational resources to facilitate well-informed shared decision making.”*

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In Europe, DB-I is available at <https://eu.densebreast-info.org/>

REFERENCE.

1. Seitzman RL, Pushkin JA & Berg WA. Radiologic technologist and radiologist knowledge gaps about breast density revealed by an online continuing education course. *Journal of Breast Imaging*, 2020; Vol. 2, Issue 4:315. doi:10.1093/jbi/wbaa039

