

ONCOLOGY

BREAST

RATE OF OVER-DIAGNOSIS OF BREAST CANCER 15 YEARS AFTER END OF MALMO MAMMOGRAPHIC SCREENING TRIAL: FOLLOW-UP STUDY Zackrisson, S., et al, Br Med J 332:689, March 2006

BACKGROUND: Estimates of the rate of overdiagnosis of breast cancer due to mammographic screening (defined as the detection of cases that would never have come to clinical attention without screening) range all the way from 5% to 50%. **METHODS:** These Swedish authors evaluated data from 42,283 women who participated in the population-based Malmo mammographic screening trial, in which women aged 45-69 were randomized to a screening invitation or to a control group; younger, but not older, women from the control group were subsequently invited to begin screening. The number of new diagnoses, over the 15 years following completion of the trial, was measured. **RESULTS:** By the end of follow-up, the total number of diagnoses of breast cancer in the younger cohort converged, reflecting new screening-based diagnoses in those who had been in the control arm of the original study. In older women, however, the excess number of diagnoses in women randomized to screening continued to increase, reflecting a continued discrepancy in screening, even though there was no increase in the number of clinically diagnosed breast cancers in the control women (which would be expected if the cancers "caught early" by screening had a clinically important counterpart among the control women). **CONCLUSIONS:** These findings are consistent with a 10% rate of overdiagnosis of breast cancer with mammographic screening of women aged 55-69. Definitive numerical estimates could not be derived regarding screening of younger women. 24 references (sophia.zackrisson@med.lu.se)