Medical Xpress

Automated breast ultrasound dramatically reduces physician interpretation time

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Automated breast ultrasound takes an average three minutes of physician time, allowing for quick and more complete breast cancer screening of asymptomatic women with dense breast tissue, a new study shows.

Mammography misses more than one-third of cancers in women with dense breasts, said Rachel Brem, MD, lead author of the study. "Ultrasound can and does detect additional, clinically significant, invasive, node negative breast cancers, that are not seen on mammography, but a hand-held ultrasound screening exam requires 20-30 minutes of physician time. Having a technique that takes just three minutes is a "game-changer" in appropriately screening these women, said Dr. Brem.

The study, conducted at George Washington University Medical School in Washington, DC, quantitatively assessed the time it took for radiologists to interpret automated breast ultrasound examinations. The mean reading time for the three radiologists in the study was 173.4 seconds, said Dr. Brem.

Currently automated breast ultrasound is limited in use, although a Food and Drug Administration panel just recently voted in favor of its efficacy and safety. "When automated breast ultrasound is integrated in the screening environment, we will see the detection of smaller, more curable breast cancers. The days of one size fits all approach to breast screening are passing. Automated breast ultrasound provides us with a tailored approach based on the individual woman's breast density," Dr.

Brem said. "When the Food and Drug Administration clears automated breast ultrasound for screening, I'm confident we will see a rapid integration of this approach into practice to improve cancer detection in women with dense breasts," she said.

The study will be presented May 3, 2012 at the American Roentgen Ray Society Annual Meeting in Vancouver, Canada.

Provided by American Roentgen Ray Society