

Ultrasound lags behind MRI for supplemental breast cancer screening

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Cancer screening of women with dense breast tissue is a subject of great interest to both the medical community and the press. Dense parenchyma reduces the sensitivity of mammography to half that of fatty breasts. Approximately 40% of women 40 years of age or older have dense breast tissue, making supplemental breast cancer screening essential.

Although supplemental screening via ultrasound is unaffected by breast density, is not associated with ionizing radiation, and does not require IV contrast material, acceptance of this modality has lagged.

According to Ellen B. Mendelson, professor of radiology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, and Wendie A. Berg, professor of radiology at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC, a significant factor is lack of available intensive training opportunities.

"The most common alternative screening modality, MRI, cannot be used with women who have pacemakers or other devices, severe claustrophobia, or renal insufficiency," say Drs. Mendelson and Berg. "To realize ultrasound's potential to increase the number of cancers detected, intensive training programs need to be put in place for physician performers and interpreters for both handheld and automated [breast ultrasound](#) systems."

The opinion piece appears in the February issue of the *American Journal of Roentgenology*.

More information:

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