

Do physicians properly advise women with dense breasts on cancer risk?

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Credit: Journal of Women's Health

A new study has shown that more than half of physicians—primary care doctors and specialists—may be unaware that dense breasts are associated with an increased risk of breast cancer, and nearly half reported not being aware of laws requiring physicians to inform women about mammography-related breast density risks and supplemental screening options. This timely and newsworthy study, which also compared the knowledge and practices of primary care physicians to specialists regarding breast density, is published in *Journal of Women's Health*.

Jordonna Brown, MBBS, MPH and a team of researchers from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY coauthored the article entitled "Physician Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Regarding Breast Density." They found that compared to specialists, primary care physicians (PCPs) were less aware of the increased risk of breast cancer risk for women with dense breasts or their state's breast cancer [density](#) laws. Breast density is both an independent risk factor for breast cancer and it can hide evidence of a breast tumor on routine mammographic screening. Most [breast density](#) laws refer patients to their PCPs to discuss their risks and options. Unfortunately, no established protocols are in place for screening women with dense breasts. Further complicating the issue, only some states mandate insurance coverage for supplemental breast imaging.

"Brown and coauthors found that two-thirds of the physicians in their study felt the need for more education about breast density, with this being true of 85% of the PCPs in particular," says Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Women's Health*, Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond, VA, and President of the Academy of Women's Health. "This represents a tremendous educational opportunity and one that could benefit a large number of women who are told they have dense breast tissue and face increased [breast](#) cancer risk."

More information: Jordonna Brown et al. Physician Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Regarding Breast Density, *Journal of Women's Health* (2019). [DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2018.7429](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2018.7429)

Read the full-text article on the *Journal of Women's Health* website through June 15, 2019.

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