

Breast cancer advice refuted

NEW YORK — Women under 50 who follow the advice of a federal panel to forgo annual mammograms are risking more severe forms of breast cancer because of it, three studies led by radiologists suggest.

Failing to get regular breast screenings left women more likely to discover cancer at an advanced stage, retrospective research at hospitals in Ohio and Missouri found. The delay resulted in larger tumors and a worse prognosis once the cancer was uncovered, the data found. A study in Colorado suggests 62 percent of doctors changed their advice to match the U.S. guideline and 16 percent fewer women got the test.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force said in 2009 that most women ages 40 to 49 don't need mammograms, restricting the test to those with a disease history or who had a greater risk for another factor. The American Cancer Society disputed the advice, and insurers still cover annual screenings.

The three studies were presented at separate medical meetings held Monday and Friday by the American Society of Breast Surgeons in Washington and the American Roentgen Ray Society, representing radiologists, in Chicago.