

Diagnostic and Supplemental Imaging

Fact Sheet – January 2023

Widespread access to preventive screening mammography, without cost sharing, is available to millions of women as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Unfortunately, some individuals at a higher risk of breast cancer or those requiring follow-up imaging due to an abnormal mammogram result face hundreds to thousands of dollars in patient cost sharing – all before they are even potentially diagnosed with breast cancer.

DIAGNOSTIC AND SUPPLEMENTAL BREAST IMAGING

- Mammography is only the initial step in the early detection process and is not alone able to diagnose cancer. Early detection of breast cancer is not possible without the medically necessary diagnostic follow-up or additional supplemental imaging required to rule out breast cancer or confirm the need for a biopsy.
- An estimated 12-16 percent of women screened with modern digital mammography require follow-up imaging.
- Eliminating out-of-pocket costs for diagnostic and supplemental imaging would improve access and likely result in more patients receiving an earlier diagnosis.
- Out-of-pocket costs are particularly burdensome on those who have previously been diagnosed with breast cancer, as diagnostic tests are recommended rather than traditional screening.
- The delays in screening due to COVID-19 created delays in screening and experts have warned that the “missed” cancers might be larger and more advanced once ultimately detected, often requiring additional imaging.

FAIR AND EQUAL COVERAGE

- In 2023 alone, more than 600 individuals will be diagnosed with breast cancer and more than 70 will die of the disease in North Dakota.
- The use of breast cancer screening and follow-up diagnostics have led to significant increases in the early detection of breast cancer in the past 30 years. However, this is not true across all demographics. Evidence shows that commercially insured Black breast cancer patients were diagnosed at a later stage and had a higher mortality rate when compared with their white counterparts with the same insurance status.
- Studies show that individuals facing high out-of-pocket costs associated with diagnostic and supplemental imaging are less likely to have the recommended follow-up imaging. This can mean that the person will delay care until the cancer has spread to other parts of the body making it much deadlier and much more costly to treat.
- A Susan G. Komen-commissioned study found the out-of-pocket costs for patients to be high, with much variation for breast imaging. For example, the average patient cost for a diagnostic mammogram is \$234 and \$1,021 for a breast MRI.
- The study also found that the inconsistency in cost and coverage is a recognized concern among patients and health care providers and leads to additional stress and confusion for women who are already dealing with the possibility of a breast cancer diagnosis.

Susan G. Komen encourages legislators to support legislation, which increases access to medically necessary diagnostic and supplemental breast imaging by eliminating burdensome patient cost sharing.