



FEDERAL BREAST DENSITY INFORM SOLUTION SOUGHT

Federal Legislation Introduced; Advocates Testify Before National Mammography Quality Assurance Advisory Committee Regarding Inclusion of Breast Density in Mammography Reports

Woodbury, CT, Dec. 6, 2011– Breast Density Inform advocates, whose legislative successes to date have been on the state level, have expanded their efforts for a single national standard for Breast Density Notification. Recently, national Breast Density Inform legislative and regulatory efforts have received forward momentum.

For decades, study after study has shown that breast density is the strongest predictor of the failure of mammography screening to detect cancer. As breast density increases, the ability of the mammogram to find cancer decreases which leads to later stage cancers in women with dense breast tissue. Mounting evidence for decades shows that high breast density is an independent risk factor for cancer. In addition, breast density and its impact on the early detection of breast cancer was the focus of several studies accepted for presentation at the 97th Annual Meeting of the [Radiological Society of North America \(RSNA\) in Chicago](#). Particularly anticipated was “The Connecticut Experiment: The Role of Ultrasound in the Screening of Dense Breasts” authored by Dr. Sarah Steenbergen and Dr. Jean Weigert. The study found that 3.2 cancers per thousand women screened were missed on mammogram but detected via ultrasound. Extrapolated nationally, that yields almost 45,000 women annually leaving their mammograms with a “normal” result who actually have invasive breast cancer.

“Presently an unequal opportunity to have an early breast cancer diagnosis exists for women with dense breast tissue,” according to Dr. Nancy Cappello, President and Founder of Are You Dense, Inc. & Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc. “Unless a woman lives in CT or Texas, the two states that have density inform laws, she has to rely upon luck to receive information about her breast density. A national standard for communicating breast density to women is long overdue.”

[Federal Legislation HR 3102](#), The Breast Density and Mammography Reporting Act of 2011, was introduced by Representatives Rosa DeLauro (CT) and Steve Israel (NY) in October. “By providing this simple piece of information, we can identify women who are at higher risk for developing breast cancer — and help to improve their chances for early detection and survival,” said Congresswoman DeLauro, Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. HR 3102 is currently housed in the Commerce and Energy Committee.

In addition to legislative efforts, conversations have begun about a regulatory solution to standardize breast density notification. Are You Dense Advocacy (AYDA) was instrumental in the FDA’s inclusion of the topic on the agenda of the [National Mammography Quality Assurance Advisory Committee \(NMQAAC\) Meeting](#) on November 4th. AYDA was joined by patients, advocacy groups, researchers and practicing radiologists in support of the proposal.

Karen Handel, Senior Vice President, Susan G. Komen for the Cure Advocacy Alliance, concurred with the proposal adding, “Komen believes that the most appropriate approach, at this time, is to require all mammography reports and lay summaries to include information regarding the density of a woman’s breasts and to include language in the lay summary that urges women with dense breasts to have a specific conversation with their physicians about the increased risk of breast cancer.”

The consensus of the NMQAAC was that all mammography reports and lay summaries should include a woman’s breast density.

“This two pronged approach involving both legislative and regulatory efforts leaves no stone unturned in this fight to get information to American women about their breast health. Without this simple density notification, women with dense breast tissue, unaware of this critical piece of their own physiology, can hardly be considered informed participants in their own breast health surveillance,” commented JoAnn Pushkin, Director of Government Relations, Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc.

As the federal solution - either legislative or regulatory – moves forward on its own timetable, AYD and AYDA vow to continue their state efforts. Connecticut and Texas currently have Breast Density Inform laws enacted, 9 states will introduce legislation this session and 10 states are considering breast density inform legislation for 2012.

About Are You Dense, Inc. & Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc.

[Are You Dense, Inc.](#) and [Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc.](#) are dedicated to raising the awareness of Breast Density, its inherent cancer risk and screening challenges, through education, advocacy and legislation. For more information, visit www.AreYouDense.org or www.AreYouDenseAdvocacy.org

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