



News Release

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Huge Savings Through Early Detection of Breast Cancer

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Catching breast cancer early saves lives and now, new data show it saves money, too. Women who get screened regularly are more likely to find cancers at an early stage when they are much easier and less costly to treat.

“Because I went back year after year to get my mammograms, my cancer was diagnosed at an early stage and it saved my life,” says breast cancer survivor Brenda Price. “I’m not claiming cancer is easy, but I know if I had waited to get screened it could have been so much worse.”

Breast cancer is diagnosed in four stages according to how advanced the disease is. Stages I and II have survival rates in the 100% to 86% range. Stages III and IV have much lower survival rates and the financial cost of treating those cancers can double or even triple for patients and insurance companies.

Among Utah women enrolled in Medicaid and being treated for breast cancer in 2007, the average cost of late stage treatment was about \$90,000. When compared to the average treatment cost for early stage breast cancers in the same population—about \$32,000—it’s clear that in addition to saving lives, early detection also saves scarce resources.

“For women in the United States, the lifetime risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer is one in eight,” said Dr. C. David Richards, breast cancer surgeon. “I cannot stress enough the importance of yearly mammograms to detect cancer in its early stages when it is easiest to treat and most affordable.”

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Mammography is still the best way to detect breast cancer early—an average of one to three years before a woman or physician can feel a lump. The American Cancer Society recommends women get a mammogram every year beginning at age 40.

The Utah Cancer Control Program (UCCP) provides free breast and cervical cancer screenings to qualifying women ages 50-64 through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In this program, women return year after year to be screened for breast and cervical cancers and the results speak for themselves. The majority (73%) of breast cancers found by the UCCP were detected at early stages. By getting screened each year, these women gain peace of mind and the knowledge that if something is found, it will likely be early stage and very treatable.

Most women diagnosed with breast and/or cervical cancers through the UCCP also qualify for free treatment of the disease through referral to Utah Medicaid.

For more information about the free screenings, call 1-800-717-1811.

5-year Survival or Breast Cancer Based on Stage at Diagnosis	
Stage	5-year Relative Survival Rate
0	100%
I	100%
II	86%
III	57%
IV	20%

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