



Effective Health Care

Methods for Providing Benign Breast Biopsy Results to Patients

Nomination Summary Document

Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- Methods for providing benign breast biopsy results to patients is not feasible for a full systematic review due to the limited data available for a review at this time.
- This topic could be considered for a potential new research project within the Effective Health Care (EHC) Program.

Topic Description

Nominator: Individual

Nomination Summary: The nominator questions how the flow of information between the patient and provider could be improved when there is a benign biopsy pathology report for a breast mass. The nominator states that there is currently no standard protocol for giving the patient information about biopsy results and indicates that the current flow of information leads to high anxiety and reduced adherence to follow-up recommendations because of long delays. The nominator questions whether current information procedures could be replaced with a formal standardized information system.

Population(s): Patients who have undergone breast biopsies with benign results

Intervention(s): A formal standardized system for conveying biopsy results to patients

Comparator(s): The current process for informing patients about biopsy results

Outcome(s): Increased compliance to future screenings, reduced patient anxiety, costs of implementing a system for informing patients of biopsy results

Key Questions from Nominator: None

Considerations

- The topic meets EHC Program appropriateness and importance criteria. (For more information, see <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/submit-a-suggestion-for-research/how-are-research-topics-chosen/>.)
- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women in the United States.
- Mammography is an important screening test for breast cancer. One of the options for following up on abnormal findings on a mammogram is biopsy. Core needle biopsy and surgical excision biopsy are

diagnostic procedures used to determine whether an observed abnormality on mammography is a malignancy and to reassure those for whom the results are benign.

- Even when the breast biopsy results in benign diagnosis, the process of waiting for results can create high levels of anxiety in patients. Methods for returning benign biopsy results to women should be in a manner that meets their needs for quick receipt of information, while also providing enough information to allay any existing anxiety and fear and promote compliance with future screening recommendations.
- Very few studies addressing the method and timing of providing benign breast biopsy results were identified; therefore, this topic is not feasible for a full systematic review due to the limited data available for a review at this time.
- Potential new research on this topic could help address the psychological impact of diagnostic testing and how communication of results impacts these outcomes.