Are 3-D Mammograms Better at Detecting Breast Cancer?

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The heated medical debate over the benefits and drawbacks of mammograms may soon come to an end, thanks to new 3-D imaging technologies that could help drastically improve the accuracy of scans to detect breast cancer. Findings from two recent studies, one published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) and the other in the journal Clinical Cancer Research, showed promising results when researchers tested these new screening methods, NBC News reports.

In the JAMA study, scientists evaluated data from 13 medical centers that recently switched over to 3-D mammos. Researchers found that, overall, there was a 15 percent reduction in mammography callbacks and a 41 percent increase in the detection of potentially lethal cancers at the centers.

In the Clinical Cancer Research report, findings showed that a new 3-D imaging technique boasted a 96 percent accuracy rate in distinguishing malignant breast tumors from benign ones.

“You can think of regular mammography as showing a closed book,” said Sarah Friedewald, MD, co-medical director of the Caldwell Breast Center and section chief of breast imaging at the Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Illinois, where doctors used the new tool. “With 3-D you are able to page through the book one page at a time without other information superimposed.”

Want to know why mammograms have such a bad reputation in the medical community? Click here to find out.

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