Who comes and who stays: Age-specific patterns and screening habits in a subsidized mammogram program in Malaysia

Ang Hong Shien

National Cancer Society of Malaysia, 50300, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Mammogram screening plays a vital role in early breast cancer detection. While subsidized programs aim to improve access, understanding who utilizes them — and whether they return — is essential to optimizing outreach and program design, particularly in Malaysia where breast cancer incidence rates have been rising, especially among women starting from age 40. **Objective:** To analyze mammogram uptake by age group and examine first-time versus repeat screening patterns among underserved women enrolled in subsidized mammography programs in Malaysia. **Materials and Methods:** A retrospective review of 5,561 women screened under various subsidized mammography programs (LPPKN, ETIQA, ESTEE LAUDERS, PERKESO, SELCARE) in 2024, stratified by age groups (30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80-89), and categorized by screening history (first-time vs repeat)1. **Results:** The highest uptake was in the 50-59 age group (n=1,987), followed by 60-69 (n=1,770) and 40-49 (n=1,171). Uptake was minimal in younger women aged 30-39 (n=14) and declined significantly beyond age 70 (70-79: n=617; 80-89: n=1). Overall, first-time screeners (n=3,484) outnumbered repeat participants (n=2,077), with new participant rates highest in programs like ETIQA (1,846 new vs 1,062 regular) and LPPKN (1,255 new vs 893 regular). The data suggests that while initial engagement is strong, sustained participation remains challenging across all age groups. **Conclusion:** Our findings reveal peak mammography utilization during the 50-69 age range, aligning with increased breast cancer risk in these age groups. However, the predominance of first-time over repeat screeners indicates suboptimal screening continuity. Given that breast cancer is the most common cancer among Malaysian women at 34.1%, targeted interventions are needed to improve long-term screening adherence and expand access to underrepresented age groups, particularly those under 40 and over 70 years.

Keywords: Prevention, mammogram, screening, follow ups, age