

Judy Dean MD first in tri-county region to join the National Mammography Database

Launched in 2009 by the American College of Radiology, the National Mammography Database (NMD) is an information system that allows facilities to compare their mammography results and outcomes with national and regional data. The goal of NMD is to improve patient care through peer review and self-assessment using objective measures. The program is voluntary, and to date only a small fraction of eligible facilities have joined.

To enter the program facilities must use computerized comprehensive data systems to track and report the interpretation of every mammogram performed, the number, size, and type of cancers, and whether the cancers were detected by imaging or because of a lump or other symptom. This data is used to calculate a variety of statistics such as:

Cancer Detection Rate, which is the number of cancers detected among women who had screening mammography at the facility. This is reported as cancers per 1000, and the usual range is 3 to 6 per thousand, depending on the population characteristics such as age, cancer risk, etc.

Positive Predictive Value (PPV) of biopsy recommendation, which is the percentage of biopsies recommended that actually turn out to be cancer. The acceptable range for PPV is considered to be 10 to 50 %. PPV is reported separately for Screening mammography (asymptomatic women) and Diagnostic mammography (women who come for mammography because of a lump or other symptom).

Percent of minimal cancers detected; a minimal cancer is either ductal carcinoma in-situ (not yet invasive) or an invasive cancer less than 10 mm in size. The higher the percent of minimal cancers, the better the facility is doing at finding early cancer.

Recall rate, which is the percentage of patients asked to return after screening studies for additional imaging; the national average for recall rate is 10 to 11 %, however a lower number is better as long as early cancers are being detected.

Taken together the data provide a “report card” for how a facility is performing and how it compares with performance at other facilities. All measures must be considered together for meaningful interpretation; for example a low recall rate and high PPV indicate poor performance when there is also a low Cancer Detection Rate with few minimal cancers detected. We are pleased to report that our data for 2010 exceeded national performance for all measures, and taken together show an excellent level of care.