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Reply



To the Editor,

We thank Dr. Lee's further comments¹ on our previous work of the mammographic screening in Taiwan.² Dr. Lee had questioned the clinical benefits of mammographic screening as a previous Canadian study with a 25-year follow-up period had shown that no difference in breast cancer mortality was observed between the mammography and control arms.³

In a comment,⁴ professor Kopans, one of the experts called on in 1990 to review the quality of the Canadian mammographic screening, attested to the fact that the overall screening quality of the Canadian study was poor because: 1) second hand machines were used to save money, 2) technologists were not taught to position the breasts in the machines properly, and 3) their radiologists had no specific training for mammographic interpretation. Moreover, the Canadian study had violated the fundamental rules of randomized controlled trial (RCT) that more women with lumps or even advanced breast cancer were arbitrarily allocated into screening group in order to be sure to get a free mammogram,^{3,4} resulting in only one-third of cancers being detected by mammography alone, which was far less than most of the other screening studies,⁵ and poorer survival than that of control group. On the contrary, in a well-qualified Swedish RCT study,⁶ a 30% reduction of breast cancer mortality can be achieved in the mammographic screening group. Also, professor Chang⁷ had reported a 33% breast cancer mortality reduction from the biennial mammographic screening in Taiwan.

With state-of-the-art digital mammographic machines (especially digital tomosynthesis),⁸ continuous education of the screening radiologists and technologists with medical audits of the mammographic interpretations,⁹ the results of Taiwan's mammographic screening have reached the level of ACR recommendations, which does make a significant clinical benefit and improve women's health in Taiwan.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the subject matter or materials discussed in this article.

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