

The COVID-19 Impact on Breast Cancer Screening and Our Efforts to Control the Damage



RUTGERS

New Jersey Medical School

Authors: Samuel Elias M.D., Miguel Rosado M.D., Anibian Rodriguez, William Lee, Magdalena Salvador M.D.

No conflicts of interest to disclose.

OBJECTIVES:

- **Understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted breast cancer screenings in an underserved population**
- **Identify any patient barriers**
- **Discuss strategies to promote the importance of screening**

Rutgers New Jersey Medical School Screening Access of Value for Essex (SAVE) Program:

- Founded in 1996, SAVE is one of the oldest New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED) funded agencies
- SAVE provides cancer prevention services to the most vulnerable population in Essex County, NJ. This patient population has been and continues to be severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Services provided include: education, screening, and coordination of care
- Unfortunately, the SAVE program was temporarily shut down due to COVID from March 2020 to June 2020

PRE-COVID SHUTDOWN OPERATIONS (September 2018 to March 2020)

- Utilized a community outreach model through the use of a mobile mammography van and over 55 community screening sites
- 15-20 NJCEED eligible patients are scheduled per screening site via a first-come-first-serve basis and are provided cancer education as well as breast and cervical cancer screenings
- During this period 1,459 screening mammograms & 264 diagnostic mammograms were performed

POST-COVID SHUTDOWN OPERATIONS (July 2020 - December 2021)

- First-come-first serve basis was switched to an appointment only system
- Patient information and education are provided via phone prior to the appointment
- During this period 1,234 screening mammograms & 272 diagnostic mammograms were performed

THE COVID-19 CALLING PROJECT:

- 1,548 patients were contacted from April 2020 to June 2020 to identify patient concerns regarding COVID-19. These concerns included:
 - Exposure to COVID-19
 - Language barrier
 - Lack of health insurance
- In collaboration with Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, the SAVE Program combated the impact of COVID-19 by:
 - Reassuring patients in their own language
 - Creating flyers to promote SAVE services
 - Developing best practice plans to keep patients safe during the pandemic (i.e. social distancing, masks, etc.)
 - Providing healthcare and social service resources

ANALYSIS:

- Compared the number of mammograms performed by the SAVE program 18 months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (September 2019 to March 2020) versus the number performed 18 months after the shutdown (July 2020 to December 2021)
- Evaluated the impact of a calling project created to educate patients about COVID precautions while providing healthcare and social services resources

RESULTS:

- During the post-shutdown period there was:
 - 15.4% reduction in screening mammograms
 - 3% increase in the number of diagnostic mammograms
- Research such as that conducted by Song et al. demonstrated higher reduction rates of screening and diagnostic mammograms over a 20 week period, measuring 58% and 38%, respectively.

CONCLUSION:

- Although COVID-19 had a profound impact on most patients, especially in the realm of breast cancer screening, the implementation of the SAVE program's strategy has helped minimize the negative impact.
- Reaching out to the patients, partnering with community organizations, and promoting SAVE services has played a vital role in encouraging more patients to have screening done.

REFERENCES:

- Naidich JJ, Boltyenkov A, Wang JJ, Chusid J, Hughes D, Sanelli PC. Impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic on Imaging Case Volumes. *J Am Coll Radiol*. 2020 Jul;17(7):865-872. doi: 10.1016/j.jacr.2020.05.004. Epub 2020 May 16. PMID: 32425710; PMCID: PMC7229978.
- Freer PE. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Breast Imaging. *Radiol Clin North Am*. 2021 Jan;59(1):1-11. doi: 10.1016/j.rcl.2020.09.008. Epub 2020 Sep 22. PMID: 33222992; PMCID: PMC7508539.
- Tsai HY, Chang YL, Shen CT, Chung WS, Tsai HJ, Chen FM. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on breast cancer screening in Taiwan. *Breast*. 2020 Dec;54:52-55. doi: 10.1016/j.breast.2020.08.014. Epub 2020 Sep 3. PMID: 32919172; PMCID: PMC7470863.