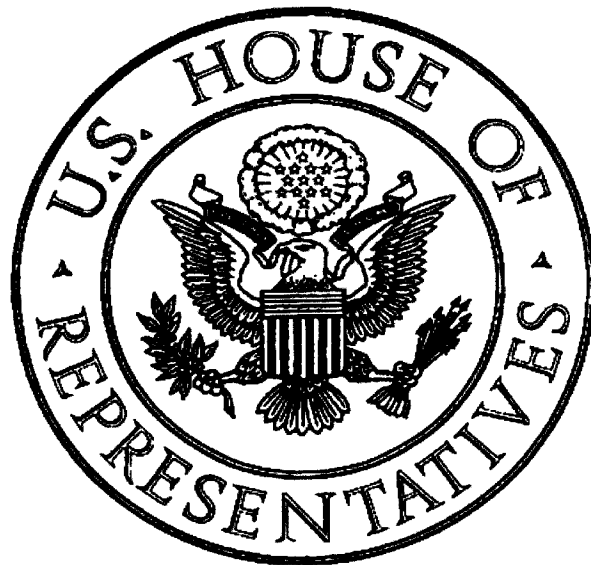


Waiting and Waiting for Mammogram Screenings: Study of Access to Basic, Life-Saving Care in New York City



Presented by
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Introduction

In 2008, it was estimated that over 14,000 new breast cancer cases were detected in women across New York State. Tragically, 3,000 women are estimated to have died from it. Mammography has proven to be an effective means in detecting these cases early and in decreasing the risk of fatality, and can be especially effective in New York given our state has the second highest rate of breast cancer in the country. One in eight women in the United States will develop breast cancer in their lifetime.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women 40 and older have a mammogram every year. Early detection through mammograms can give women hope by significantly increasing their chance of survival from breast cancer.

Mammography is not a lucrative business. Due to high overhead, inflation, rising medical costs and the low reimbursement rate paid by Medicare, offering mammograms can actually result in a net loss for the facilities that provide them. A 2007 report by Rep. Weiner found that 67 clinics had closed in New York City since 1999 – a 26 percent drop.

Medicare reimbursement rates for mammogram screenings are well below the actual cost of performing the mammogram, causing some facilities to lose money just for giving the procedure. Private insurers base their reimbursement rates on Medicare levels, making this a concern for everyone in need of mammography screenings.

Brooklyn women can wait up to four months just to access basic, cancer-detecting mammograms, a new investigation from Representative Anthony Weiner (D – Brooklyn and Queens), a member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, showed today. The investigation, a follow-up study on mammogram accessibility, surveyed 33 randomly selected public and private health clinics and found that 14 screening facilities had at least a month of wait time – despite the fact that some breast cancers can more than double in size in that time.

Background

Representative Weiner conducted a similar study in 2002, which showed that 55 facilities in New York City had stopped offering mammography screenings since 1999. The study also revealed that women had waited for an appointment an average of more than six weeks and, in some cases, as much as six months. That year, the national Medicare reimbursement rate set for a screening mammography was approximately \$80. Yet the average cost nationwide was \$104.

Staff worked with – and sincerely thanks – the following groups and individuals: The American College of Radiology; American Cancer Society; and Dr. David Dershaw, Director of Breast Imaging at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Other sources include the CMS Physician Fee Schedule 2009.

2009 Mammogram Wait Times

Facility	2009 Wait Time
Queens	Avg. 4.3 weeks
North Shore University Hospital	4 weeks
Queens Hospital Center	6 weeks
Advanced Radiology Imaging	4 weeks
NY Hospital of Queens	1 week
Mt. Sinai Hospital of Queens	3 weeks
Flushing Hospital Medical Center	4 weeks
Jamaica Hospital	8 weeks
Brooklyn	Avg. 4 weeks
Professional Radiology Services	3.5 weeks
Brookdale University Hospital	4 weeks
Wyckoff Heights Medical Center	16.5 weeks
Interfaith Medical Center	1 week
Doshi Diagnostic	Same day
Maimonides Medical Center	1 week
Woodhull Medical and Mental Health Center	1 week
Bronx	Avg. 5.4 weeks
Montefiore Hospital – Moses / Greene	5 weeks
Bronx Lebanon Hospital	15 weeks
University Diagnostic Imaging	2 weeks
North Central Bronx Hospital	1 week
St. Barnabas Hospital	11 weeks
Segundo Ruiz Belvis Center	1 week
Morrisania Diagnostic & Treatment Center	3 weeks
Manhattan	Avg. 1.2 weeks
Beth Israel Medical Center	4 weeks
West Side Radiology	1 week
Cornell Medical Imaging	2 days
Breast Examination of Harlem	2 weeks
Manhattan Diagnostic Radiology	1 day
Harlem Hospital Center	same day
Gouverneur Healthcare Services	1 week
Staten Island	Avg. 5.2 weeks
Staten Island University Hospital	3 weeks
Richmond Radiology	1 week
Staten Island Medical Group (Annondale)	5 weeks
Regional Radiology	12 weeks
Staten Island Medical Group (Clove Road)	5 weeks

Source: Telephone Survey Conducted by the Office of Rep. Anthony D. Weiner, March 2009

Methodology

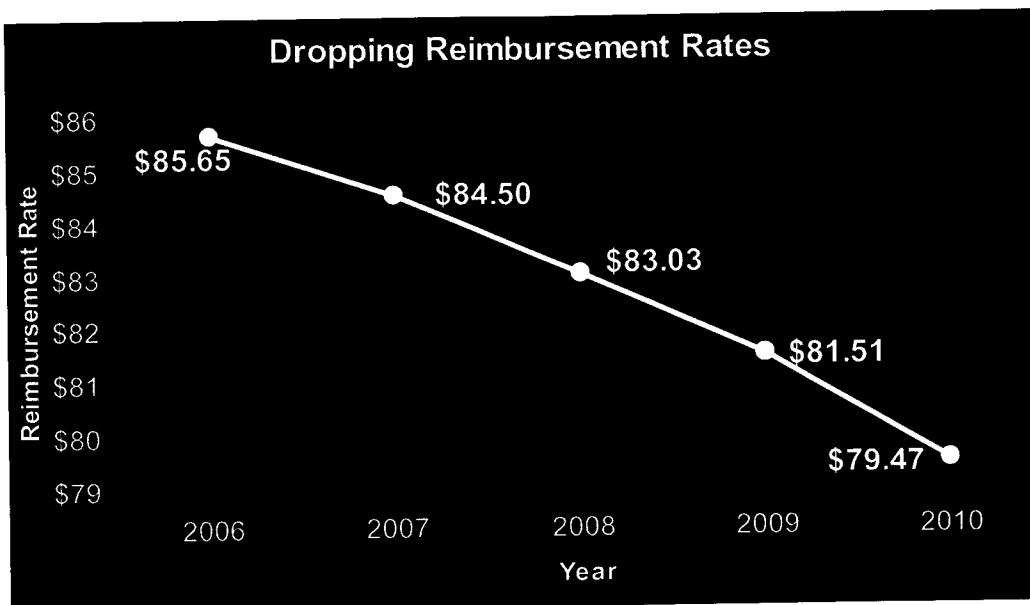
Thirty-three mammogram facilities were chosen at random in New York City. Staffers from the office of Representative Weiner called the facilities and followed a script that asked what the earliest appointment possible was for a mammogram and if that wait time was average. Staffers did not reveal they were calling from a Congressional Office. The methodology used in the updated study of February 2008 is consistent with the methodology used in the original study of July 2007.

Solution to the Mammogram Problem

While the average cost for a film mammogram screening is around \$125, the 2009 national Medicare base reimbursement rate is only about \$81.51 – leaving health centers to cover a \$44 gap. That rate is down from \$83.03 in 2008, a 1.8 percent decrease.

While the average cost for a digital mammogram screening is around \$175, the 2009 national Medicare base reimbursement rate is \$129.84 – leaving health centers to cover a \$45 gap. That rate is down from \$133.69 in 2008, a 2.8 percent decrease.

From 2006-2009, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services reduced Medicare reimbursement rates by 4.8 percent as a result of a 2005 bill passed by the Republican-controlled Congress. Medicare cuts will take effect through 2010, with projected 2010 rates at approximately \$79 for film screening and \$127 for digital screening, leaving facilities with a \$46 to \$48 overrun.



Source: CMS Physician Fee Schedule

Reimbursement Rates in New York City and Surrounding Areas in 2009

	Manhattan	Queens	NYC Suburbs	NY State	US
Film Screening	\$98.85	\$95.70	\$98.86	\$75.28	\$81.51
Digital Screening	\$161.59	\$155.58	\$161.16	\$119.79	\$129.84

Source: American College of Radiology, 2009

To help reduce long wait times, Representative Weiner introduced legislation in 2001 – and helped pass into law in 2003 – to increase Medicare reimbursement rates. Private plans use these reimbursement rates as a baseline for their negotiations with employers, therefore, increased Medicare reimbursement has an impact throughout the insurance market.

Rep. Weiner plans to reintroduce legislation this year to increase reimbursement rates 15 percent in 2009 – \$95 per screening – and index the rate in later years. The step will help financially burdened health clinics, who are currently losing money performing mammograms, to stay in the field and maintain an adequate workforce supply that can screen patients.