Project Title: Thinking about starting breast cancer screening: a decision aid for women aged 40 years

Code: SPH8

Host School/ Institute
Sydney School of Public Health

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Project Type: Design

Project Category: Public Health, Health behaviour and Decision making, imaging, Cancer

Project Keywords:
1. Breast cancer
2. Cancer screening
3. Mammograms
4. Decision aids
5. Overdiagnosis

Project Description:

Background: Mammography screening for breast cancer has both benefits (reduced risk of dying from breast cancer) and harms (risk of overdiagnosis and overtreatment, and false positives). Health authorities recommend that women should be properly informed about these benefits and harms before making a choice to be screened. Decision aids have been shown to help people make informed choices which are consistent with their own values and preferences. In 2007-10, we developed and evaluated an online decision aid for women considering starting breast screening at age 40, which has been visited over 40,000 times. It was recently selected by the US National Cancer Institute (NCI) for inclusion in its Research Tested Interventions Program, which aims to promote the adoption of evidence based interventions by public health practitioners (see http://rtips.cancer.gov/rtips/index.do to view examples.)

Current project: We have updated our model (which estimates the outcomes of mammography screening for Australian women) and have tested ways to communicate overdiagnosis to women. Our decision aid needs to be updated with this new information, and needs to be migrated to new internet software. A highly analytical student with good IT skills and an interest in public health will be a valuable member of our team to help accomplish this update.

To succeed in this project you will need: Good IT skills (ideally familiar with REDCap or similar browser based software) and a strong interest in public health, cancer screening programs and empowering women to be active, evidence-informed decision makers about their health.

From this project you will gain: Experience working with a world leading team in breast cancer screening; a thorough understanding of the benefits and harms of mammography screening for breast cancer, including overdiagnosis; and an understanding of the principles of effective risk communication.