The Affordable Care Act: Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening

In 2016, an estimated 246,660 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer and over 40,450 will die from the disease, making it the second leading cause of cancer death for women. Fortunately, evidence-based tools exist for the early detection of breast cancer, catching it when it’s most treatable. In fact, the 5-year relative survival rate is 99 percent when breast cancer is detected at an early stage, but only 26 percent for late-stage disease.

There are significant barriers to accessing these life-saving services, including insurance coverage and cost. Only 22 percent of uninsured women aged 40-64 received a mammogram in the past year, compared to 54 percent of insured women. Additionally, even relatively small out-of-pocket costs can significantly reduce mammography rates, particularly for low-income women.

The Affordable Care Act: Increasing Access to Screening

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is helping to improve insurance coverage and reduce costs of breast cancer screenings for more women. Specifically, the ACA:

✓ Requires commercial health plans and Medicaid expansion programs to cover routine breast cancer screening at no cost to the patient;
✓ Eliminates out-of-pocket costs for breast cancer screening for Medicare beneficiaries;
✓ Provides an incentive for traditional Medicaid programs to cover preventive services, including breast cancer screening, at no cost to the enrollee;
✓ Establishes education campaigns specifically on young women’s breast health;
✓ Creates the Prevention and Public Health Fund – a historic investment in communities to increase cancer screenings, reduce health disparities, control the obesity epidemic, reduce tobacco use, and fill the gaps in our health care workforce.

ACS CAN Position

ACS CAN is committed to ensuring that all women have access to evidence-based prevention, early detection, and treatment services that are critical for breast cancer prevention and care. We strongly advocate for protecting and increasing health care coverage for comprehensive breast cancer screening and related services.

ACS CAN will continue to fight for the preservation of the Prevention and Public Health Fund to the funding levels mandated under the Affordable Care Act. We will continue to engage federal and state policy makers to ensure that preventive benefit coverage definitions and eligibility criteria are clear and consistent for consumers and providers.

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