New Study Shows Continued Need for the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

A study released by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) and the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable (NCCRT) estimates that in 2017 roughly 2.6 million women aged 40-64 could remain uninsured and be eligible for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP). The report, *Health Reform and the Implications for Cancer Screening*,¹ provides national and state-specific estimates of the number of uninsured women in 2017 based on three scenarios: Medicaid expansions as of April 2015, no state Medicaid expansions, and if all states expand Medicaid under the ACA.

**The NBCCEDP and the Implications for Cancer Screening**

Congress established the NBCCEDP in 1990 to reduce breast and cervical cancer deaths among medically underserved women. The program, administered by the CDC, provides lifesaving breast and cervical cancer screenings, information, and follow-up services to women – especially lower income women. Since 1991, NBCCEDP has provided over 12 million screening exams to more than 4.8 million women, detecting nearly 68,000 breast cancers, over 3,700 cervical cancers, and over 171,000 premalignant cervical lesions.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) improved access to breast and cervical cancer screening for many low-income, underserved women through expanded insurance coverage and elimination of cost-sharing. However, even with full implementation of the ACA, and the assumption that all states would expand Medicaid, millions of women would still remain uninsured or underinsured. Uninsured women are approximately 30 percent less likely than insured women to have had a Pap test in the past three years and about half as likely to have had a mammogram in the past year. In both cases there are financial, language and other barriers to accessing these screening services. For these women, the NBCCEDP may be the only way they receive life-saving cancer screenings.

**Key Report Findings**

The report estimates that, overall, 2.6 million or 13.5 percent of women aged 40-64 will remain uninsured and eligible for breast cancer screening services through the NBCCEDP program in 2017. Similarly, 5.7 million or 14.6 percent of women (age 21-64) will remain uninsured in 2017 and will be eligible for cervical cancer screening through NBCCEDP. Notably, by 2017, women in non-Medicaid expansion states will be over three times as likely to be uninsured (23.3 percent) as women in expansion states (8 percent).

The following table details the number of women estimated to remain uninsured in 2017 in Medicaid expansion states and non-expansion states who could be eligible for the NBCCEDP. The data is based on Medicaid expansion decisions as of April 2015.

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¹ Study conducted by the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health.
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Uninsured in Non-Medicaid Expansion States (22 States)</th>
<th>Uninsured in Medicaid Expansion States (29 States)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breast Cancer Screening – Women age 40-64</td>
<td>1.8 million (22.0%)</td>
<td>779,400 (7.1%)</td>
<td>2.6 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breast Cancer Screening – Women age 50-64</td>
<td>944,200 (20.0%)</td>
<td>392,400 (6.3%)</td>
<td>1.3 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cervical Cancer Screening - Women age 21-64</td>
<td>3.9 million (23.3%)</td>
<td>1.8 million (8.0%)</td>
<td>5.7 million</td>
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Federal guidelines establish an eligibility baseline to direct services to uninsured and underinsured women at or below 250% of federal poverty level: ages 21 to 64 for cervical cancer screening and ages 40 to 64 for breast cancer screening. NBCCEDP grantees have the ability to establish more limited age eligibility guidelines.

Additionally, the report estimates that if all states expand their Medicaid programs – which would greatly decrease the number of uninsured - 1.7 million women aged 40-64, 864,200 women aged 50-64, and 3.9 million women aged 21-64 would still remain uninsured.

**The Continued Need for the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program**

The NBCCEDP is essential in the fight against cancer. The program raises awareness among women about the importance of getting screened, assures timely access to screening services, as well as access to appropriate treatment referrals for women diagnosed with cancer. The NBCCEDP ensures that more women will be screened in a timely and cost-effective manner.

ACS CAN and its advocates are working tirelessly to increase both federal and state funding that supports the NBCCEDP to ensure that underserved women have access to these lifesaving cancer screenings and treatments.