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Original Research

Women's satisfaction with mammography and predictors of participation in an organized breast cancer screening program: Perspectives of a Local Health Unit in Rome



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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The aims of the study were to evaluate satisfaction with the mammography service of the Local Health Unit RMA (Rome, Lazio Region) among women who have attended the program and to identify the predictors of participation.

Study design: Cross-sectional study.

Methods: A telephone-based questionnaire was administered to women eligible for mammography screening. The respondents were randomly selected and interviewed by the health center staff.

Results: A total of 502 women were interviewed, of which 264 (52.6%) have attended the screening program at least once. The attendees received the invitation letter more often than the non-attendees (88.3% vs 77.7%; $P = 0.002$), were more willing to participate (85.6% vs 69.3%; $P = 0.001$), they considered the letter very clear (15% vs 10.8%; $P = 0.003$), and information obtained through the hotline appropriate (64.7% vs 56.7%; $P = 0.002$). Overall satisfaction was high. Critical issues were lack of response from the hotline staff, medium-long waiting time for the results and further examinations. Age >61 years (odds ratio [OR] = 2.747; 95% confidence interval [CI] = 1.842–4.096), receiving the invitation letter (OR = 2.539; 95% CI = 1.519–4.242), and intention to participate (OR = 3.086; 95% CI = 1.938–4.915) were significantly associated with participation in the screening program.

Conclusions: Women's satisfaction with mammography is an important aspect of service utilization. Implementation of strategies to reduce waiting time, increase operating hours, and improve the invitation procedure and the hotline service could enhance satisfaction and attendance rate.

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Introduction

Breast cancer is the leading cancer in women in both developed and developing countries, but rare among males.^{1,2} Incidence rates vary nearly four-fold across the world regions, with rates ranging from 27 per 100,000 women in Middle Africa and Eastern Asia to 96 per 100,000 women in Western Europe.¹

The incidence rate is higher in Northern Italy (123.4 cases/100,000 women) compared to the Centre (103.8 cases/100,000 women) and the South Islands (93.1 cases/100,000 women).³

In accordance with the recommendations of the Italian Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO), and recent European guidelines, all women aged 50–69 years residing in the territory of the Local Health Unit (LHU) RMA (Rome, Lazio Region) are invited to undertake a mammogram every two years, for free and without a referral from a general practitioner.⁴ The attendance rate of invitees for mammography screening in 2013 was around 57% in Italy⁵ and 48% in Lazio Region.⁶ The average breast cancer screening coverage rate is 20% in the LHU RMA (lifestyle surveillance system PASSI 2008–2013).⁶

The present study aims to assess consumer satisfaction with the mammography service among women residing in the territory of the LHU RMA (Central Italy), who have attended the breast cancer screening program at least once.

Methods

A telephone-based questionnaire was administered between May 2014 and May 2015 to eligible women; the target population was 69,883 as at 31 December 2014.⁷ The questionnaire was validated through a pilot study on a random sample of 149 women in 2014. It demonstrated good reliability properties with the highest value of Cronbach's alpha on seven items = 0.614.⁸

The respondents were randomly selected and interviewed by the administrative staff of the LHU. The mammography service was blind to the findings of the survey until after its completion.

Participation in the study was strictly voluntary after oral informed consent; sensitive data were treated according to the Italian data protection code (Legislative Decree no. 196/2003). The local ethics committee approved the survey.

Results

Participation

Up to 238 women (47.4%) with a mean age of 55.82 years (standard deviation \pm 5.89) have never attended the mammography screening program (non-attendees), while 264 women (52.6%) with a mean age of 59.96 years (standard deviation \pm 5.27) have attended the screening program at least once (attendees). The majority were Italian with a medium-high educational level (over 40% with senior high school

diploma and over 30% with degree) and most were public employees (42.9% non-attendees and 38.6% attendees). The response rate was 72% (502 respondents of 700 women contacted).

Of 264 attendees, 244 (92.4%) have participated in the previous round of the screening program. Regarding the non-attendees, 157 (66%) was aware of the availability of mammography screening for breast cancer prevention in Lazio region, and 205 (86.1%) expressed their intention to participate in future breast cancer screening campaigns (Table 1).

The main reason for not participating in the current round of the screening program was a recent mammogram performed elsewhere for over 60% of the sample. Other reasons, for 28.9% of attendees and 13.7% of non-attendees, were change of residence (i.e. moving to another municipality, city, or region) or going on a journey.

Invitation

The invitation letter sent by the LHU for the current screening round was received mostly by the attendees of previous screening rounds (88.3% vs 77.7%; $P = 0.002$). Among women who received the invitation letter, 200 (85.8%) attendees expressed their willingness to rescreen, and 124 (67%) non-attendees declared they were going to participate for the first time ($P < 0.001$). Women who did not receive the invitation letter were informed that they could still take part in the current round; among these respondents, 26 (83.9%) attendees and 41 (77.4%) non-attendees accepted to participate. The invitation letter was clear for 78.5% of attendees and 74.6% of non-attendees; it was very clear especially for the attendees (15% vs 10.8%; $P = 0.003$).

Hotline service

The screening program hotline has been contacted by 85 (32.2%) attendees for information, to cancel or reschedule their appointment at a different center due to personal or professional issues (i.e. travel distance from place of residency/workplace or operating hours of the screening center). There are five screening centers in the LHU RMA territory, most appointments were scheduled in Nuovo Regina Margherita Hospital (215, 42.8%) and Luzzatti Health center (185, 36.9%); the other three centers had only 6–8% of appointments. Current operating hours of four centers are Monday through Friday, until 19:00 and one center until 17:00; three centers are also open on Saturday until 13:00.

Sixty non-attendees (25.2%) also contacted the hotline for more information on the mammography procedure (e.g. how is it performed, what will they experience during and after the procedure, method and time by which mammogram results would be delivered, and so forth).

Information obtained through the hotline was considered appropriate for 64.7% of attendees and 56.7% of non-attendees ($P = 0.002$); it was very appropriate mostly for the non-attendees (20.0% vs 3.5%). Among those who contacted the hotline, 10 (11.8%) attendees and 12 (20%) non-attendees affirmed they did not always receive a response from the hotline staff even after several attempts ($P = 0.173$).

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