

# Statement regarding **Mammography and Its Relationship to Thyroid Cancer**

*April 11, 2011*

At the Swedish Cancer Institute, we continue our relentless pursuit of excellence in patient-focused breast care. As such, we felt it important to address recent concerns about the safety of mammography, specifically as it relates to the amount of radiation received by the thyroid.

Based on scientific trials, we recommend annual screening mammography in women ages 40 and older. Within the United States, the death rates have dropped by 30% since the introduction of annual screening mammograms. Mammograms are not perfect, but continue to save lives. Both the American Cancer Society and the American College of Radiology continue to recommend annual screening mammograms in women age 40 and older.

Recently the media reported a story that the risk of thyroid cancer has increased drastically because of radiation exposure during mammograms. This concern is not supported in the scientific literature. The risk of thyroid cancer being brought on by annual mammograms is about 1 in 17.1 million women being screened, a miniscule theoretical chance.

The thyroid gland is not directly exposed to the X-ray beam during a mammogram and receives a very low dose of scattered radiation — equivalent

to about 30 minutes of natural background radiation received by Americans from natural sources. Wearing a radiation shield could interfere with optimal positioning during the mammogram and result in artifacts, both potentially interfering with the ability to detect a breast cancer on the mammogram. We, like the American College of Radiology, therefore do not recommend routine thyroid shielding during a mammogram.

At Swedish, we take your personal safety very seriously. We believe that the benefit from regular mammograms in the appropriate age group far exceeds unproven harms from their resulting low-dose radiation. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact our breast centers for more information.

Sally Browning, M.D.

*Medical Director, Swedish Edmonds Breast Center*

Mary Kelly, M.D.

*Medical Director, Comprehensive Breast Center at Swedish/Cherry Hill, Womens Imaging Center at Swedish/Ballard*

Jay Parikh, M.D.

*Medical Director, Womens Diagnostic Imaging Center at Swedish/First Hill*

Eric Rosen, M.D.

*Medical Director, Breast Care Center at Swedish/First Hill*