Danish women favour hypothetical breast cancer screening with harms, but no benefits

Eeva-Liisa Røssell¹, Anne Bo¹, Signe Borgquist², Therese K. Gronborg¹, Ivar S. Kristiansen³, Laura D. Scherer⁴, Henrik Støvring¹
¹Aarhus University, Aarhus, DK, ²Aarhus University Hospital, Aarhus, DK, ³Oslo University, Oslo, NO, ⁴University of Colorado, Denver, US

1: Introduction

Background:
- A need for improved information and more informed decision making with respect to breast cancer screening.
- Decision making might be influenced by overly positive attitudes, affect, and worry, fear and anxiety of having breast cancer.

Hypothesis: A large proportion of women would be willing to participate in screening regardless of benefits versus harms related to unnecessary treatment.

Aim: Estimate Danish women’s willingness to participate in hypothetical breast cancer screening with no health benefits, only harms.

2: Materials and methods

Participants:
- Random sample of 768 women aged 44-49 in the Central Denmark Region (non-screening population).

Data and statistics:
- Online survey about hypothetical screening and questions on screening attitude, breast cancer worry, perceived likelihood of breast cancer, breast cancer history, health literacy and assessment of the hypothetical screening.
- Linkage to register data on sociodemographic factors.
- Univariate logistic regression.

3: Results

- Survey participation rate: 42.1% (323/768).
- Willingness to participate: 82.3% (95% CI: 77.5-86.5) (247/300).
- Very certain about decision: 63.2% (95% CI: 56.8-69.2) among women willing to participate and 52.8% (95% CI: 38.6-66.7) among women not willing to participate.

4: Conclusions

- High willingness to participate in hypothetical screening with harms, but no health benefits.
- Most women understood that the screening did not reduce breast cancer mortality and were certain about their decision – although women not willing to participate were less certain.
- Danish women seem unduly positive about breast cancer screening.

Note: mortality = risk of dying from breast cancer