



Testing and Early Diagnosis

Anomalies in Breast Cancer Imaging: Next Steps

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Maria Let's say a woman undergoes a screening mammogram and an abnormal area is seen on imaging, what are the usual next steps?

Dr. Medhavi So whenever we see any abnormality on a mammogram, it is very important to find out whether that abnormality is cancer or not. So in order to do so, the patient will get a callback and they will be recommended to do additional imaging. It would usually be a diagnostic mammogram along with an ultrasound. If the need be, a patient may be recommended to go for an MRI in addition to a mammogram and an ultrasound. Let us say, based on the repeat imaging, we are still suspicious about the given area, then patients are usually recommended to undergo a biopsy of said area. So these biopsies can be done either under mammograms, an ultrasound, or MRIs. During the procedure, a needle is placed in the suspicious area and the sample is sent to the lab, where a specialized doctor, called a pathologist, looks at the cells in the microscope and gives a final diagnosis as to whether this is breast cancer or not. Overall, I would say do not be afraid of mammograms. Of all the women who get mammograms, approximately 10% will be called back for some abnormality, but out of these, I would say less than 0.5% women do eventually get diagnosed with breast cancer. So, just because we see something suspicious on mammograms, that automatically does not mean that you have breast cancer.