

more expense for the medical system, but what price do you put on a human life? Would you tell men not to feel for testicular lumps? If they found one, wouldn't that require a biopsy? Wouldn't it cause worry? And, heaven forbid, it might cost the medical system money for treatment. Perhaps it would be better if all cancers were not found until they were untreatable. That would save the medical system lots of money.

**Lauri Winters**  
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#### Reference

1. Baxter N, with the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care. Preventive health care, 2001 update: Should women be routinely taught breast self-examination to screen for breast cancer? *CMAJ* 2001;164(13):1837-46.

**I** find the release of the study on breast self-examination very distressing.<sup>1</sup> In 1996 during breast self-examination I found a lump that was invasive

ductal carcinoma. Breast self-examination saved my life. Wouldn't women have been better served if the money used for this study had been used for research instead of to study breast self-examination outside of North America? Why is there not a more concerted effort between Canada and the United States for joint research and treatment? Stop wasting money and find a cure. This disease is no fun and I don't want to die from it.

**Shelley Snell**  
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#### Reference

1. Baxter N, with the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care. Preventive health care, 2001 update: Should women be routinely taught breast self-examination to screen for breast cancer? *CMAJ* 2001;164(13):1837-46.

**I** am 28 years old and a 20-month survivor of stage I invasive ductal carcinoma. I found my lump through breast self-examination at the age of 27, 13

years before the recommended age for baseline mammography. Mammography and ultrasound of the lump revealed no abnormality. It was not until excisional biopsy was performed that the correct diagnosis was made. Clearly, breast self-examination saved my life.

Women under the age of 40 years are not receiving adequate attention from the medical community. There are few studies focused on women in this age group. The recent article in *CMAJ* on breast self-examination avoided making recommendations for young women owing to "the lack of sufficient evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of the manoeuvre" in women younger than 40 years.<sup>1</sup>

Young women's breast tissue is often too dense for mammography to be an effective diagnostic tool. While the clinical breast examination is key to early detection, there is an inherent flaw in that the physician is not familiar with an individual woman's breasts. That leaves

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