

# BreastScreen WA Thermography

## Statement on use of thermography to detect breast cancer

### Position:

BreastScreen Australia, The National Breast Cancer Centre and The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists do not recommend the use of thermography for the early detection of breast cancer as there is insufficient evidence to do so.

Screening mammography is the only evidence based imaging modality shown to reduce breast cancer mortality. There is no current scientific evidence to support the use of thermography in the early detection of breast cancer and in the reduction of mortality.

### Thermography:

- Breast thermography, also known as thermal breast imaging, uses infrared imaging to detect changes in skin temperature, and produce “heat pictures” of the breast. The rationale for thermography in breast imaging is that the skin overlying a breast cancer can be warmer than that of surrounding areas.
- Women may be falsely reassured that they are not at risk of breast cancer by a false negative (i.e. miss a change due to breast cancer) thermography examination which could lead to unnecessary delay in breast cancer diagnosis. A review commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Health (Kerr 2004) concluded that the evidence currently available does not provide enough support for the role of infrared thermography for either population screening or adjuvant diagnostic testing of breast cancer. The National Horizon Scanning Unit reviewed the use of thermography in a report issued in February 2009, and concluded that there was little evidence to support its use for the diagnosis of breast cancer in asymptomatic women.

Screening mammograms can detect up to 90% of breast cancers and have the ability to detect breast cancer at a much smaller size, therefore reducing the number of deaths from breast cancer.

### References:

1. Kerr J 2004 Review of the effectiveness of infrared thermal imaging (thermography) for population screening and diagnostic testing of breast cancer. NZHTA Tech Brief Series 2004; 3(3).
2. New and emerging technologies for breast cancer detection. National Horizon Scanning Unit Emerging Technology Bulletin February 2009. Adelaide Health Technology Assessment (AHTA) on behalf of National Horizon Scanning Unit (HealthPACT and MSAC). Available from: <http://www.horizonscanning.gov.au/internet/horizon/publishing.nsf/Content/etb-1>  
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