Breast cancer is a major concern to women in the United States, with more 192,200 women projected to be diagnosed with invasive disease in 2001 (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2001). Because of the strong association among screening, early detection, and survival, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) aims to improve breast cancer screening behaviors for women age 50 and older (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 1990).

Recommended screening methods include mammography, clinical breast examination (CBE), and breast self-examination (BSE). For women 50 years old and older, annual mammography and CBE are recommended (ACS, 1998; National Cancer Advisory Board [NCAB], 1997; U.S. Preventive Task Force, 1998). Controversy has existed regarding recommended mammography screening for women between the ages of 40 and 49 (ACS, 1998; Feig, 1995; NCAB; NIH, 1997) because of the decreased sensitivity of mammography in younger women (Baines & Miller, 1997). All women in this age group should have annual CBEs.

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