

**Continuum Cancer Centers of New York's Comprehensive Breast Programs at Beth Israel Medical Center and St. Luke's and Roosevelt Hospitals strongly opposes the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations released November 16<sup>th</sup> 2009.**

The USPSTF now recommends against routine breast cancer screening for women under the age of 50. The new recommendation says women between the ages of 40 and 49 at high risk for breast cancer should talk to their doctor about the best time to start regular, biennial screening mammography. In addition to revising the age at which mammography screening should begin, the USPSTF also suggests changing the screening interval from one year to two; states there is insufficient evidence to determine the screening benefits and harms for women aged 75 or older, and recommends against teaching breast self-examination.

These recommendations on screening mammography are less rigorous than their previously published USPSTF 2002 guidelines as well as the practice standards endorsed by all major medical organizations and most specialists treating breast cancer. Furthermore, what the report fails to recognize is that there has been a fifty percent reduction in the death rate in women diagnosed with breast cancer between 40 and 50 over recent years due to early detection by mammography and better treatment becoming available.

We agree with the statement issued made public by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on November 18<sup>th</sup> that says that the US Government's policy on mammograms goes unchanged and that the controversial guidelines released by the USPSTF caused a great deal of confusion and worry among women and their families across this country. Sebelius also stressed that the guidelines were issued by "an outside independent panel of doctors and scientists who do not set federal policy and don't determine what services are covered by the federal government.

Our Cancer Center will continue to practice the screening mammography recommendations set forth by the American Cancer Society, American College of Radiology, American Society of Breast Surgeons and Society of Breast Imaging.