

THE NATIONAL HEALTH BREAST SCREENING PROGRAMME

The NHSBSP, which was set up in 1989 offers a free Breast Screening Service every three years to all women aged between 50-64, who are registered with a G.P.; the age group was extended to 70 in 2004.

Breast Screening is a way of detecting Breast Cancer often at a very early stage, when there are no outward signs. The sooner the problem is detected, the more ways there are of treating it successfully.

In East Kent the death rate in the screened population has fallen by 20%. This has been achieved by a combination of factors. They include close teamwork between Surgeons, Oncologists, Radiologists and Pathologists; improved treatments and widespread use of drug therapy; early diagnosis through mammography and Breast Screening; and an increase in awareness of Breast Cancer among women.

DEPARTMENT HISTORY

The department was opened in 1989, having two x-ray rooms, two clinical rooms and a small office and reception area. There was also one mobile screening unit. Professor Stuart Field, director, headed a team of six.

In 2003, due to the increase in the number of women screened from 46,000 to 86,000 every three years, the department was enlarged and renamed the Stuart Field Mammography Unit.

Now, under the directorship of Dr. Susan Lowe, there are 38 members of staff, including both full and part time staff, both administration and imaging.

The new department now has three x-ray rooms, two ultrasound rooms, two clinical rooms, a counselling room and a very welcoming reception area. There are now three mobile screening units to cover the screening population of East Kent.

MOBILE UNIT

The vast majority of women are invited to a mobile unit for their screening mammogram, located in their area. These are normally situated in a car park attached to a public building. The mobile unit remains at a site for anywhere between 8 weeks and 9 months depending on the number of women to be screened. The mobile unit has been designed to be welcoming. It has a seated reception area with separate changing cubicles. The staff on the mobile unit are all female. It normally takes between a week and four weeks for the results to be sent to both the woman and their G.P.

Who is invited to be screened?

All women between the ages **50-70yrs** are automatically invited every **three** years. Lists of women are held by the family health service authorities. Women will only be invited to be screened if they are registered with a G.P. and all their information is correct.

Screening begins **within** three years of the woman's 50th birthday, when the local screening unit is in their area. Women over **70yrs** who wish to continue with three yearly mammograms are able to by contacting the Breast Screening Unit at the Kent and Canterbury hospital to arrange an appointment. The Government increased the age limit from **64yrs** to **70yrs** in 2004.

Screening is usually performed in a mobile unit.

Web site link can be found at www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

Which women are asked to attend the Breast Screening Unit at the Kent and Canterbury hospital for their routine screening mammogram?

- Women with implants.
- Disabled women and those who have difficulty climbing stairs.
- Women with severe mental impairment.

Women who have implants

The Department of Health has strongly advised that women who have Trilucent implants should not be screened. All women who have other types of implants should attend the Breast Screening Unit at Kent and Canterbury hospital for their mammogram.

When would a mammogram not be performed?

If a lady has had a mammogram within the previous **six** months.

DISABLED CLINIC

The screening invitation letter does inform the women being invited that access to the mobile unit is difficult and if they are unable to climb stairs an alternative arrangement can be made.

The Breast Screening Unit has clinics for disabled women twice a week. The advantages of this clinic are:

- 1) The appointment slots are 30 minutes long instead of the 6 minutes on the mobile unit.
- 2) There are facilities in the Breast Screening Unit for women who are unable to stand.
- 3) We are able to x-ray women in a wheelchair (as long as the arms of the chair can be removed).

The Radiographer is able to check the films for any technical fault, therefore being able to repeat any film straight away instead of having to call the woman back another day. This is a mammogram deemed to be inadequate, this is not diagnosing from the mammogram.