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Disinformation threatening human lives: „Mammograms are destroying women's health“

Coffee Beans

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The narrative that mammograms do more harm than good first appeared in Romanian media in 2016. Coincidentally, it is Romania where breast cancer is one of the most common causes of death in women (1). According to the World Health Organization, it is in this country that this diagnosis accounts for 16% of the total number of new cancer diagnoses each year (2). This narrative is very often promoted alongside claims that 'Diseases disappear on their own' or 'Medical interventions are an attack on the sanctity of the human body and, as a result, potentiate diseases even more' (3).

Recently, a post has started circulating on social media in several languages (English, French, Polish, Slovak, Finnish) on the topic that "Mammograms cause cancer, mammography is the biggest organized crime against women. Women who have mammograms probably don't realize how they are harming themselves." Followed by statements such as, "During a mammogram, healthy, highly sensitive mammary tissue is bombarded with radiation, stimulating tumor growth and spreading metastases." The opposite is true - the radiation dose used in mammography is very low, comparable to that used in dental X-rays. Exposure to radiation is not dangerous and cannot cause cancer (4).

With regard to the further misinformation claim that "the medical mafia forces women to have mammograms to make them sick patients and then profit from the diseases they cause", we cannot but conclude the following. Early detection of cancer increases a patient's survival rate. According to the American Cancer Society, detection of early-stage breast cancer has a nearly 100 percent five-year survival rate. For breast cancer detected at later stages, the survival rate is much lower (5). In the Czech Republic, around ten thousand new breast cancers are diagnosed annually. In addition to genetic predisposition, unhealthy lifestyle (smoking, alcohol, lack of exercise) is a typical factor. Regular preventive examinations are all the more important, mammography being one of them (6).

Literature

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