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Disability in Focus: Disability & Women's Health

Sara B. Rainer

University of New Hampshire, Durham, Sara.Rainer@unh.edu

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Women with Disabilities Need Better Access to Preventive Cancer Screening

In NH, women with disabilities are significantly less likely than the general population to comply with breast and cervical cancer screening recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (see Table 1).

Preventive screenings are especially challenging for women with disabilities due to barriers, such as:

- Lack of accessible health care facilities and medical equipment; and
- Health care providers who lack cultural competence with disability and awareness of needed accommodation.

Policy Options:

- Expand access to ADA-compliant medical facilities and equipment (e.g., adjustable exam beds, accessible mammography machines)
- Train health care professionals to offer culturally competent, responsive care to patients with disabilities

"I have never met a woman who thinks having a mammogram is fun, but for me there are extra barriers. I have cerebral palsy. I use a wheelchair to get around, and my muscles are really tight. It's very difficult to maneuver my chair around to get close enough to the machine. My knees get stuck underneath when the platform is lowered. In order to get a good picture, they often lift me up and push me into the machine, which is very painful and leaves me with bruised ribs. I can understand why some women with disabilities skip having mammograms altogether."

Kathy, Somersworth, NH

Table 1. Women with Disabilities Less Likely to Receive Recommended Cancer Screenings (%)

	No mammogram in last 2 years	No Pap test in last 3 years	Last Pap test > than 5 years ago
No Disability	14	13	7
Mobility	18	28*	26*
Cognitive	24	23	14
Visual	42*	21	19
Multiple Limitation	36*	23	22*

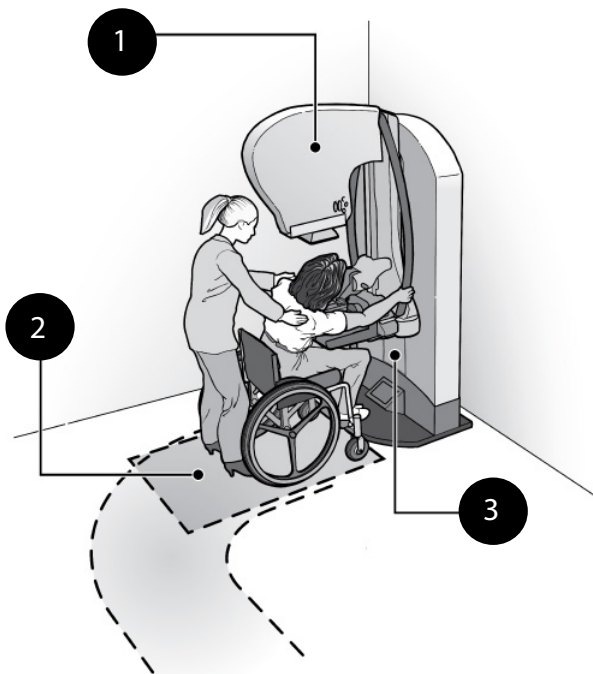
*Statistically significant compared to no disability

This issue of *Disability In Focus* reports weighted data from women ages 21 to 74 who responded to the 2014 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

Accessible medical equipment is a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to help women with disabilities get needed screenings and preventive care.

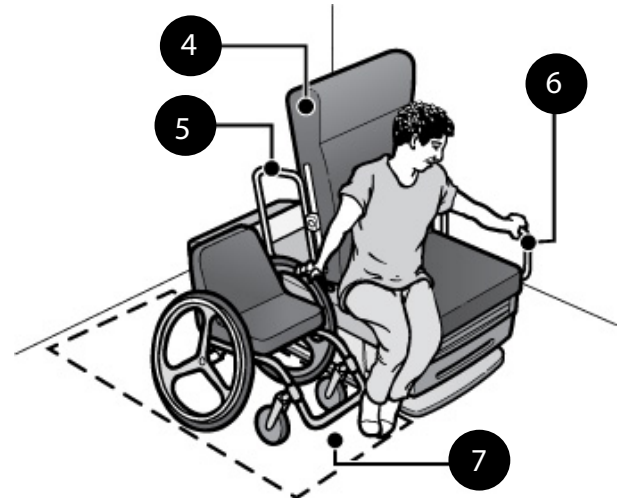
Accessible mammography machines:

- (1) pivot and adjust height;
- (2) allow approach from different angles;
- (3) provide clearance for chairs and knees.



Accessible examination tables:

- (4) articulate for transfers and positioning;
- (5) have removable rails or armrests;
- (6) have rails on both sides;
- (7) allow space for approach and transfer.



Images courtesy of the US Department of Justice

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Alternative formats available on request.

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