



BREAST IMAGING AND ITS CURRENT PROSPECTIVE

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Article Received on 25/10/2018

Article Revised on 15/11/2018

Article Accepted on 05/12/2018

ABSTRACTS

Background: The imaging is crucial component not only for breast cancer screening, but also for diagnosis, evaluation, treatment, and follow-up of patients with breast cancer. **Methods:** The author reviews the current prospective and provides her personal views in describing the status of various imaging modalities such as mammography, computer-aided detection, ultrasonography dedicated magnetic resonance imaging, Magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS), positron-emission mammography and technologies under research for evaluating the breast detection and diagnosis. **Results:** Mammography is the unsurpassed screening modality for asymptomatic women and the initial imaging modality for symptomatic women. The advent of digital mammography may likely upgrade its sensitivity and specificity in women under 50 years of age and in those with dense breasts compared standard mammography. Computer-aided detection assists in experienced mammographers and enhances detection of microcalcifications in dense breasts. USG is used for characterization of the mammographic abnormality and for primary imaging of young women <30 years. Magnetic resonance elastography need further studies to establish their roles. Breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) provides anatomical and physiologic tissue features. It is useful in preoperative evaluation, clarification of indeterminate mammograms, and follow-up of BRCA mutation carriers. Contrast enhanced MRI is so far the most sensitive technology for the diagnosis of malignancy at the expense of reduced specificity. However, diffusion, and MR elastography have been applied to breast lesion characterization and show promise. The addition of MR Spectroscopy (MRS) can improve its specificity. In-vivo MRS is a valuable method to obtain the biochemical status of normal and diseased tissues. Malignant tissues contain a high concentration of choline-containing compounds that can be used as a biochemical marker. Molecular imaging can be useful in a select group of patients like those with suspected distant metastases, to evaluate loco regional extent, to detect the recurrence and monitor response to therapy. Positron-emission mammography promises enhanced detection of ductal carcinoma in situ, even when not associated with microcalcifications, and should aid surgical planning. Optical imaging and T Scan currently under research have potential to emerge as an adjunct to the existing technologies. **Conclusions:** This review presents the progress made in different imaging techniques in breast cancer screening, diagnosis and detection. The ideal modality for breast imaging should lead to early detection of cancer, free from adverse effects and cost effective. The advances in breast imaging have improved the sensitivity of detecting breast abnormalities. However, cost may be major limiting factors for the extensive application of some of these advances in the clinical backgrounds. The clinician needs to be aware of the benefits and weaknesses of each technology in order to apply them appropriately in evaluating their patients with breast problems in the clinical settings.

KEYWORDS: Breast cancer, Digital mamography, Computer aided diagnosis, Ultrasound, MRI, MR elastography (MRE), magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS), Molecular Imaging and Technologies under research.

INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is one of the major causes of mortality in women globally (Torre et al. 2015). According to

projections, about 24 million new breast cancer cases will be diagnosed by 2035, the incidence rates are high in developed countries, whereas the rates are low in less

developed countries. The disease affects thousands of Canadian women every year. Representing 26 percent of all cancers in women, breast cancer claims the lives of an estimated 5,300 Canadian women each year, and the Canadian Cancer Society estimates that one in nine women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. Considering these staggering figures, women need more effective ways to detect this killer early. Imaging provides an optimal role to offer both screening and diagnostic tests for women at every degree of risk for the disease. With the advancement in technology it is postulated that decreasing breast cancer mortality may be due to increased use of mammographic screening, early detection of disease, availability of recent advancement in breast modalities. This article briefly describes the conventional and recent advances in breast imaging i.e Mammography, Ultrasonography, breast MRI, Molecular studies and Technologies under research.

Breast Imaging

Mammography: Remains the primary imaging method for breast screening and detection of breast cancer with sensitivity of around 75% but with variable specificity (Pisano *et al.* 2005). However, the sensitivity drops down to 50% in case of radiographic dense breast tissue, which is more common seen in younger women. (Pisano *et al.* 2005). It is proven to reduce breast cancer mortality by about 20% on long-term follow-up in randomized trials (Tabár *et al.* 2011, Oeffinger *et al.* 2015). It is also reported that this technique misses lesion around 10% to 25% of all breast cancers (Kim *et al.* 2011). The success of any screening program of asymptomatic women depends on the detection of subtle and small lesion. Limitation of mammogram includes exposure to ionizing radiation.

Digital Mammography Also called full-field digital mammography (FFDM) presently FFDM had entered the field with great promise. The newer technology of FFDM, despite its cost, clearly offers major advances in mammographic practice. FFDM allows for the decoupling and optimization of the processes of image acquisition, display, and storage. Digital imaging is useful in performing and streamlining needle localization and stereotactic procedures. The time necessary for a patient to remain still and in compression for these procedures is greatly reduced when using digital imaging.

Computer Aided Detection (CAD): The false-negative rate for mammography has been reported to be between 10% and 30% (Ganott *et al.* 1999, Morton *et al.* 2006 and James *et al.* 2004). However, Sensitivity can be improved further by 5% to 15% by inter rater reliability, when two radiologists are used rather than one (Destounis *et al.* 2004, Morton *et al.* 2006) which aids in costs expenses incurred from double reading. CAD systems have proven to be quite sensitive in detecting breast cancers on screening mammograms. Studies have shown that CAD correctly highlight 98% of

microcalcifications, 86% to 88% of masses, and 90% of all cancers (Castellino *et al.* 2000, James *et al.* 2004). The detection rates tend to increase with the level of mammographic suspicion (Baum *et al.* 2002). Specificity, however, proves to be a problem with CAD. A retrospective review by a panel of 5 radiologists of the prior mammograms of these biopsy-proven breast cancer cases showed that 286 (67%) of 427 were visible and that 115 (27%) of 427 of these warranted recalls. CAD flagged 89 (77%) of these 115 cases. To recapitulate, numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of CAD on breast cancer detection rates in screening mammography (Ganott *et al.* 1999, Castellino *et al.* 2000, Destounis *et al.* 2004, James *et al.* 2004, Morton *et al.* 2006). CAD does not seem to significantly increase recall rates, although the algorithms allow for many false-positive prompts. CAD has the greatest potential impact on finding microcalcifications, particularly in dense breasts, that might otherwise be overlooked by radiologists. CAD can also have false-negative results; therefore, the absence of CAD detection of an otherwise suspicious mammographic finding should not prevent a diagnostic workup.

Ultrasonography (USG): Breast ultrasound is often used as a supplementary tool in assessing palpable breast abnormalities and mammographically occult lesions. Its results are strongly dependent on the examiner's interpretation. It differentiates cystic from solid lesions; benign and malignant breast neoplasm in women aged 40 years or younger when mammography is less sensitive due to dense breasts. The sensitivity of detecting cancer is reported as 65% and 92% for cystic masses (Kailash *et al.* 2008). However, USG screening of asymptomatic women gives high rates of both false positive and false negative outcomes and difficulty in detecting microcalcification in ductal carcinoma in situ (Rankin 2000; Gordon 2002). Generally, biopsies, which are at the end of today's breast cancer detection clinical work flow, show a large number of false-positive cases for the established imaging modalities. (Christiansen *et al.* 2000, Hubbard *et al.* 2011). However, the color doppler help to assess the aggressiveness of lesion by demonstrating the increased vascularity and assessing the lymphnodes. The use of contrast-enhanced power Doppler sonography has managed to detect vessels in up to 95% of malignant tumors.

Fine Needle Aspiration Cytology (FNAC): Is considered as the gold standard method, cost-effective and useful for mass lesions (Giard *et al.* 1992). It has a sensitivity and specificity of > 90% and > 65%, respectively. The positive predictive value was reported to be > 99% (Kocjan 2008) depending on the skill of the person performing the aspiration and expertise of the cytopathologist. Sometimes the problematic cells are missed, resulting in a false negative result. Further, FNAC cannot reliably predict the invasion of a tumor (Tse *et al.* 2010).

Core Needle Biopsy (CNB): Is a percutaneous procedure that involves removing a small amount of breast tissue using a hollow "core" needle (DeAngelis *et al.* 1998; Kocjan 2008). It allows more accurate assessment of breast mass or non-mass lesions than FNAC. It is reported that CNB has a high specificity of 99% (de Waal *et al.* 2006) and it improves the preoperative diagnosis more often than repeat FNAC (78.0% vs. 54.8%) (Kooistra *et al.* 2009). Limitation of CNB is difficulty in assessing deeply seated lump within the breast.

Breast MR Imaging

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI): Is a recent method that is used for diagnosis and monitoring the response of the therapeutic response of breast cancer patients. Where, both x-ray mammogram and USG give low specificity and also has limitations in identifying lesions in dense breast or microcalcification. In this regard, interest is focused on breast MRI and its potential in clinical setting has been reported (Rankin 2000; Goscin *et al.* 2001; Sardanelli 2004; Jagannathan *et al.* 2005; Deurloo *et al.* 2005; Von Goethem *et al.* 2006; Jagannathan *et al.* 2009; Kuhl 2007a; Kuhl 2007b; Partridge *et al.* 2008; Sharma *et al.* 2010).

Dynamic Contrast Enhanced MRI (DCE-MRI): Helps in assessing the functional and morphologic properties of a tumor (like angiogenesis, size etc.) (Stomper *et al.* 1997; Kuhl *et al.* 2006; Kuhl 2007a; Warner *et al.* 2008; Huang *et al.* 2010). The method is helpful to improve the ability to differentiate malignant from benign breast lesions in high-risk women (Komatsu *et al.* 2005; Warren *et al.* 2006). It is useful for delineation of multifocal breast lesions with high sensitivity (93 - 99%) but low specificity (37 - 85%) (Warren *et al.* 2006). The high sensitivity of DCE-MRI is suitable for diagnosis, but the limitation of its lower specificity is a major drawback (Boetes *et al.* 1994; Saslow *et al.* 2007). Further the specificity might be achieved by combining both the morphological features and the enhancement kinetics information (Degani *et al.* 1997; Liberman *et al.* 2002). Kuhl and Goto *et al.* (2005a) and Goto *et al.* (2007) compared the dynamic enhancement patterns and morphological features of enhancing lesions. Other studies have suggested the improved diagnostic accuracy of breast MRI (Degani *et al.* 1997; Liberman *et al.* 2002, Schnall *et al.* 2006) by a combination of both the dynamic uptake and morphological features. It was shown that increased predictive value could be obtained when integration of both morphology and contrast uptake dynamics is taken in to consideration (Schnall *et al.* 2006).

MR Elastography (MRE): Is a novel non-invasive technique to measure the spatial stiffness of soft tissues. The routine breast screening as malignant masses are known to be stiffer than benign lesions and normal breast tissue (Krouskop *et al.* 1998, Samani *et al.* 2007), it lacks great sensitivity and specificity as a diagnostic test. MRE

is well suited for breast cancer diagnosis and staging as a means to quantify the properties currently assessed by manual palpation. Some studies have documented the differentiation between normal, malignant and benign tumors (Lorenzen *et al.* 2002; Xydeas *et al.* 2005). This may overcome the limitations of manual palpation and increase the DCE-MRI specificity as well (Sinkus *et al.* 2000; Manduca *et al.* 2001; Oliphant *et al.* 2001; Sinkus *et al.* 2007). While the initial results are encouraging, the most significant limitation for MRE in breast cancer is spatial resolution and detection of small focal lesions.

Diffusion Weighted Imaging: Considering the low specificity of DCE-MRI, diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI) based on measurement of water diffusion properties of tissues has been explored by many researchers (Marini *et al.* 2007; Luo; *et al.* 2007; Baron *et al.* 2010; Malayeri *et al.* 2011; Petralia *et al.* 2011; Iima *et al.* 2011; Malayeri *et al.* 2011; Hirano *et al.* 2012). Englander *et al.* were the first to report DWI of the breast (Englander *et al.* 1997). DWI is valuable in diagnosis and assessing the therapeutic response of breast tumors (Guo *et al.* 2002; Kuroki *et al.* 2004; Woodhams *et al.* 2005a; Woodhams *et al.* 2005b; Rubesova *et al.* 2006; Manton *et al.* 2006; Luo *et al.* 2007; Yankeelov *et al.* 2007; Kuroki *et al.* 2008; Woodhams *et al.* 2009; Sharma *et al.* 2009; Siegmann *et al.* 2011; McLaughlin *et al.* 2011; Rahbar *et al.* 2011; Iacconi *et al.* 2011; Pereira *et al.* 2011; Sonmez *et al.* 2011; Kawamura *et al.* 2011; Belli *et al.* 2011; Jensen *et al.* 2011; Shin *et al.* 2011; Park *et al.* 2012; Wu *et al.* 2012; Türkbey *et al.* 2012; Shin *et al.* 2012). Studies have shown that apparent diffusion coefficient (ADC) was lower in malignant tumors compared to normal and benign breast tissues (Luo *et al.* 2007; Pereira *et al.* 2011, Sharma *et al.* 2016). Kul *et al.* (2011) have reported a higher sensitivity of 97.9% with a lower specificity of 75.7% using DCE- MRI, while DWI gave a lower sensitivity and a higher specificity of 91.5% and 86.5% in the characterization of malignant and benign breast lesions. For characterization of breast lesions into malignant and benign using ADC values, several groups have reported a sensitivity and specificity of 93% and 88%, respectively (Guo *et al.* 2002; Jin G *et al.* 2010). Sharma *et al.* also reported the role of DWI for the differentiation of viable and necrotic areas of breast cancer and its potential utility to guide voxel positioning for MRS in the absence of dynamic contrast-enhanced MRI data (Sharma *et al.* 2012). The usefulness of ADC values to differentiate non-responders from responders as early as the first cycle of NACT compared to the tumor diameter (Sharma *et al.* 2009, Agrawal *et al.* 2017).

Apart from the above imaging methods, *in vivo*, magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS) on the other hand provides biochemical information of tissues. Phosphorus (³¹P) and proton (¹H) are the most widely used nuclei in clinical MRS studies of cancer, providing biochemical information at the metabolite level. The potential of MRS for studying cellular metabolism *in*

vivo was first demonstrated using ^{31}P spectra acquired from animal tissues (Hoult et al. 1974). ^{31}P MRS has been used for characterization and therapeutic assessment of breast tumors (Glaholm et al. 1989; Redmond et al. 1991; Leach et al. 1998; Ronen et al. 2001). Although ^{31}P MRS studies demonstrated promising results, its lower MR sensitivity and requirements of special hardware limit its use in clinical settings. Further, Park et al. reported that ^{31}P MRS studies were not helpful for demonstrating differential diagnosis between malignant and benign breast lesions (Park et al. 2001).

Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy: Thus, *in vivo* MRS studies on breast mostly use ^1H nucleus and these are of two types: (i) single-voxel spectroscopy (SVS), and (ii) multi-voxel spectroscopy, also known as magnetic resonance spectroscopic imaging (MRSI). SVS method acquires the signal from a single volume of interest, while MRSI acquires spectrum from multiple voxels simultaneously. MRSI has the ability to assess multiple lesions and normal tissues simultaneously, as well as to distinguish lesion borders and infiltration into the surrounding tissues (Katz-Brull et al. 2002; Bolan et al. 2003; Baik et al. 2006; Baik et al. 2005; Baek et al. 2008; Danishad et al. 2010). SVS has been shown to be robust in the estimation of tCho concentration in differentiating various breast tissues (Katz-Brull et al. 2002; Bolan et al. 2003; Baik et al. 2006; Baek et al. 2008). In order to characterize different breast tissues (diseased and normal) two important parameters have been measured from the *in vivo* ^1H MRS: (i) water to fat (W-F) ratio, and (ii) total choline (tCho) concentration. Sijens et al. (1988) were the first to report breast MRS using W-F ratio demonstrating higher W-F ratio in breast cancer compared to normal breast tissues. Later several studies reported that malignant breast tissues show increased water signal with a high W-F ratio as compared to normal breast tissues (Jagannathan et al. 1998; Jagannathan et al. 1999; Kumar et al. 2006).

Later ^1H MRS studies showed the observation of tCho peak in malignant breast lesions and reported its potential to differentiate malignant from benign tissues (Jagannathan et al. 1998; Roebuck et al. 1998; Jagannathan et al. 1999; Cecil et al. 2001; Yeung et al. 2001; Jagannathan et al. 2001; Katz-Brull et al. 2002; Gary et al. 2007; Stanwell and Mountford, 2007; Sharma et al. 2008; Sardanelli et al. 2008). In differentiating malignant from benign lesions (in younger patients), a sensitivity of 100% and a specificity of 89% to 100% were reported using MRS (Roebuck et al. 1998; Cecil et al. 2001; Yeung et al. 2001; Shrama et al. 2001). Several groups based on observation of presence/absence of tCho resonance reported 83% sensitivity with the specificity of 85% in detecting cancer and indicated that these values could be as high as 92% (Katz-Brull et al. 2002; Haddadin et al. 2009).

Potential of tCho SNR (signal-to-noise ratio) was also reported for differential diagnosis of malignant and normal breast tissues and for assessing the response to chemotherapy (Hu et al. 2005; Bartella et al. 2006; Danishad et al. 2010). Studies have documented that the application of *in vivo* MRS in a clinical setting might increase the specificity of MRI (Meisamy et al. 2005; Mountford et al. 2009). However, with the advancement in hardware, coil technology and improved pulse sequences for simultaneous suppression of both water and fat resonances, the tCho peak has been observed frequently in benign lesions, in normal breast tissue of volunteers as well as in the breast of lactating women (Roebuck et al. 1998; Jagannathan et al. 1998; Kvistad et al. 1999; Jagannathan et al. 2001; Kim et al. 2003; Jacobs et al. 2004; Stanwell et al. 2005; Baek et al. 2008; Sah et al. 2009, 2010 and 2012, Sah et al. 2015). These findings indicated that the qualitative or semi-quantitative assessment of tCho is not sufficient for the differentiation of malignant, benign and normal breast tissues.

Thus, there is a need for quantitative estimation of tCho concentration to differentiate various lesion types and the normal breast tissues. Different research groups have reported the absolute concentration of tCho in the range of 0.7 - 21.2 mmol/kg in malignant tumors (Roebuck et al. 1998; Meisamy et al. 2005; Baik et al. 2006, Sah et al. 2012a and 2012b). The changes in the concentration of tCho for monitoring the response of tumors to chemotherapeutic agents have also been reported by various research groups (Meisamy et al. 2004; Tan et al. 2006; Baek et al. 2008; Sah et al. 2009; Baek et al. 2009; Sharma et al. 2010; Sah et al. 2010; Tozaki et al. 2010b, Sharma et al. 2018). Tozaki et al. (2008 and 2010b) reported their findings based on tCho integral and reported either absence or reduction in the tCho concentration as a result of response to treatment. Reduction in tCho concentration has been shown to occur as early as twenty four hours after the first cycle of chemotherapy (Meisamy et al. 2004).

Molecular Imaging

Positron Emission Tomography: provides physiology in addition to anatomical information. The administered Fluoro Deoxy Glucose (FDG) is transported through glucose transporter into cells Converted into FDG 6 Phosphate which are Trapped within the cell and decays to emit positron (positive electron). Its potential application lies in detection of breast malignancy – in dense breasts, implanted breasts, occult primary, nodal metastases – axillary and inframammary, Systemic metastases, response to chemotherapy (Tozaki et al. 2008 and 2010a). However, it is Less sensitive for tumors < 1cm, slowly growing tumors.

Positron Emission Mammography: It is considered small less expensive PET unit specially designed for breast and is more sensitive and can detect tumors up to 12mm. The compression can be applied and attached to

mammographic unit. It helps in prediction of early response to chemotherapeutic agents.

Scintimammography: Scintimammography involves the use of non specific tumors imaging radionuclides as well as other agents such Indium labeled somatostatin analysis and monoclonal antibodies in diagnosis and staging of breast cancer. The most commonly used radionuclides are Tl-201, Tc-99m Sestabini, Tc-99m tetrofosmin and bone imaging agent Tc-99m methylene diphosphonate.

Under Research

Optical Imaging: Optical imaging is considered as a noninvasive, in vivo imaging and use for quantification of oxy, deoxy hemoglobin and contrast agents - thereby assessing the tumor angiogenesis and hypoxia. This imaging tool does not use ionizing radiation. The Indo Cyanine Green (ICG), an intravenous contrast agent extravasates through tumor vessels of high permeability is detected with near infrared part of spectrum. It can be combined with other imaging modalities - USG, MRI and PET (Ntziachristos et al. 2001). During the last 20 years, tremendous amount of work has been carried out on in vivo optical imaging of the female breast. Starting from attempts to obtain high-contrast images of breast carcinomas by a noninvasive and comparably cheap method, the focus of research moved more and more to the development of methods suited to quantitatively measure the functional parameters of breast tissue and to understand the origin of contrast in near-infrared images of diseased as well as healthy breast tissue. Currently, sensitivity and specificity of optical mammography are likely too low for its application as a screening tool. More importantly, the poor spatial resolution of diffuse optical imaging prevents early detection of breast cancer, which is a main aim of screening (Grosenick et al. 2018).

T Scan: It measures low level bioelectric currents to produce real images of electrical impedance properties of breast tissues. No ionizing radiation or compression of breast is used. One volt of continuous electricity is transmitted into body through electrode patches attached to the arm and measured with probe placed on breast. Tumors conduct electricity differently than healthy tissues and appear as bright white spots.

Summary

Mammography is the best screening modality for asymptomatic women and the initial imaging modality for symptomatic women >30 years of age. Full-field digital mammography is superior to standard mammography in women under 50 years of age and in those with dense breasts and may likely increase its sensitivity and specificity. USG is used for characterization of the mammographic abnormality and for primary imaging of young women <30 years. Color power doppler has adjunct value to differentiate the benign from malignant lesions. Contrast enhancement

may further refine its current status. MR elastography need further studies to establish their roles as is limited by spatial resolution.

Contrast enhanced MRI is so far the most sensitive technology for the diagnosis of malignancy at the expense of reduced specificity. Its scopes are further expanding to include staging of tumor and detection of recurrences. The addition of MR Spectroscopy can improve its specificity. Molecular imaging can be useful in a select group of patients like those with suspected distant metastases, to evaluate loco regional extent, to detect the recurrence and monitor response to therapy.

Recent Advancement and Future Directions

Optical imaging and T Scan currently under research have potential to emerge as an adjunct to the existing technologies. The ideal modality for breast imaging in future, should lead to early detection of cancer, should be free from adverse effects and should be cost effective. It should be capable of delineating the benign from the malignant masses, thereby avoiding unnecessary biopsies and further help in assessing the response of chemotherapeutic agents. This information can provide targets for new drug development and understanding of breast tumor heterogeneity. Technologies for imaging the breast continue to advance, however cost issues may be limiting factor for their widespread application in the clinical setting.

Authors Disclosures: The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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