Hormone replacement study’s unintended consequences: Fewer mammograms

By ACSH Staff — August 24, 2011

Fewer women had mammograms done in 2005, and a recent study published in the journal Cancer suggests [1] that the decline is linked to a decreased use of hormone replacement therapy for menopausal symptoms. In order to investigate the drop in mammograms, researchers from the National Cancer Institute looked at data from more than 7,000 women who were interviewed in 2005. It turned out that when women (ages 50 to 64) opted out of hormone therapy, they were less likely to see their doctor on a regular basis and thus less likely to schedule a mammogram.

ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross notes that, after the flawed 2002 Women’s Health Initiative study suggested that the risks of hormone replacement therapy were greater than the benefits, many women chose not to undergo the treatment. The inaccuracy of that 2002 study prevented a lot of women from choosing what we now know is a very effective option says Dr. Ross. That so many women stopped getting regular mammograms makes it all the worse. He advises both women and their physicians to make a conscious effort to schedule mammograms, regardless of whether a woman is seeing her doctor on a regular basis.