

Welcome and Keynote Talk

11:15 – 11:45 am

How did the pandemic harm breast screening programs and how should a return strategy look like?*Moderation: Aline Hambüchen, Forchheim, Germany*

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Breast cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer death in women worldwide¹, representing a major public health burden. Many European countries have adopted mass screening programmes, since early detection of breast cancer can reduce mortality and the intensity of treatment required.

On March, 11 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the novel coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) a global pandemic. Since the virus is highly contagious, lockdowns and social distancing have been the mainstream responses to this disease.

At first, the major international societies of radiology recommended to temporarily interrupt breast screening programmes, postponing examinations for 2-3 months, as a precautionary measure. Guidelines for breast cancer imaging and diagnosis, including instructions about the management of screening examinations, the prioritization of actions to be performed, and protective equipment, were promptly produced by the Italian College of Breast Radiologist by SIRM (Società Italiana di Radiologia Medica e Interventistica) and EUSOBI (European Society of Breast Imaging), among others. My oral presentation includes the highlights of these recommendations.

Isolation measures implemented have led to a reduction in viral transmission and hospitalization but the impact of the disruption of breast screening programmes is still being determined. I present a review of the existing literature regarding the effect of the pandemic on screening programmes and breast cancer mortality.

Finally, I analyze how the pandemic has modified the approach to patient care, current restart strategies, and possible directions for the future.

¹ <https://www.bcrf.org/breast-cancer-statistics-and-resources/>

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