Abstract
The benefit of early breast cancer detection is the foundation for programs around the globe to reduce morbidity and mortality related to breast cancer. These programs range from educational programs targeted to women and health professionals to organized or opportunistic screening programs that target specific age groups of women. Modern mammography programs tend to follow the protocols from the randomized clinical trials, but there is variation in key program elements such as the age groups invited to screening, the screening interval, performance indicators, and the uptake rate. Until recently, the emphasis on early breast cancer detection was limited to mammography, but the steady rise in incidence and mortality in low and medium resource countries, where mammography may be unaffordable, has led to a renewal in emphasizing the incremental value of downsizing palpable tumors through physical exams. There is consensus that programs should be designed based on disease burden and available resources, but that even in low resource countries there are opportunities to reduce breast deaths through earlier diagnosis and effective treatment. Screening programs are most effective when they are organized, and program planners should consider WHO criteria and local input data as a basis for tailoring screening programs to the needs of their population.

Keywords
Early detection of cancer, breast neoplasms, early diagnosis.