Breast screening: interval cancers explained

Out of every 1,000 women screened for breast cancer:

8 are diagnosed with cancer
992 have a normal result, of which 3 are interval cancers

For every 100 interval cancers that are reviewed:

80 women had a normal screening mammogram. The cancer could not have been detected at their most recent screen (true negative). These women should have the findings communicated to them according to guidance*. Taking this approach, organisations can ensure they are operating in an open and transparent manner. No other action is required.

13 women have cancers that most screeners would not have detected. Only subtle changes can be seen on the screening mammogram (false negative). These women should have the findings communicated to them according to guidance*. Taking this approach, organisations can ensure they are operating in an open and transparent manner. No other action is required.

7 women have cancers that most screeners would have detected on the screening mammogram (also false negatives). These are notifiable safety incidents and a formal apology in accordance with Duty of Candour regulations should be followed.

* NHS Screening Programmes: Guidance on applying Duty of Candour and disclosing audit results.