See Yourself in Living Color: The Benefits of Thermography

*By Nina Rea*

Many of us have been touched in some way by breast cancer and want to be proactive in preventing this disease in ourselves and those we love. For years, the gold standard of breast cancer detection has been mammography, with many doctors believing it to be the best test for early detection. However, there is another, often overlooked, screening that can help determine the health of breast tissue as much as 8 to 10 years before a mammogram, ultrasound or MRI can detect problems. It is called thermography.

Thermography, also known as Medical Thermal Imaging or Medical Infrared Imaging, is a mapping of heat. It can be best understood if you think of it like a weather map of the body. Unlike structural exams, such as X-ray, ultrasound, mammography, and MRI, thermography is a test of physiology. In other words, Medical Thermography visualizes the function of a body by seeing the heat, or lack of, associated with blood flow. It does so by using a specialized infrared camera to measure temperature emitted from the body. Hyperthermic (hot) and hypothermic (cold) patterns show the body in a rainbow of colors, like a weather map.

What is the benefit of measuring heat patterns in the body? Abnormal heat spots on the body are an indication of inflammation. Inflammation is the first sign of many degenerative diseases, including cancer, heart disease, arthritis, thyroid issues and other chronic health conditions. In fact, because thermal imaging detects changes at the cellular level, studies suggest it can detect abnormal activity 8 to 10 years earlier than other tests -- well before a mass can be detected by an anatomical study such as a mammogram or ultrasound.

By detecting inflammation in its earliest stages, thermography offers an opportunity to address the issue before it becomes problematic. With early detection, there is usually time to make adjustments to your diet, beliefs and lifestyle to transform cells before a more serious condition develops. Clinics across the country are having reportable success in using thermography to screen and then reversing a pathogenic process with the aid of early intervention.

Extensive research was done on thermography in the 1970s and 1980s to determine its accuracy and reliability. In 1981, Michel Gautherie, Ph.D., and his colleagues reported on a 10-year study, which found that an abnormal thermogram was 10 times more significant as a future risk indicator for breast cancer than having a history of breast cancer in your family. In 1982, the Food and Drug Administration published its approval and classification of thermography as an adjunctive diagnostic screening procedure for the detection of breast cancer.

Today, thermography is accepted by the Natural Cancer Institute as an adjunct to mammography (though some people are opting for thermograms over mammograms), and there are over 900 peer-reviewed articles about medical thermography.

Unlike mammography, thermography does NOT emit radiation. Thermography simply uses an infrared camera to take photos of the body, making it a great non-invasive option for routine screening. There is no physical contact, so no compression or pain is involved. It can be especially helpful for women with dense and/or cystic breasts or implants, as well as for those who have undergone mastectomies.

Thermography’s applications extend beyond breast health. Thermal imaging can also help discern issues with nerve/tissue injury, thyroid, dental/TMJ, stroke risk, neck and low back injury, diabetic and peripheral disease, Carpal Tunnel and Reynaud’s Syndromes, leg and vascular diseases, RSD (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome)/CRPS, sports injuries, wound healing and more. (In some of these cases, it is the cold patterns that are of concern.)

Thermography is not a replacement for structural/anatomical studies. Ideally, women *and* men should use thermography as the earliest detection step currently available and proceed with their healthcare provider’s recommendations from there.

When seeking out a thermography provider, it’s important to do your homework. Not all camera systems, thermologists or technicians are the same. An excellent thermographic system is one that is able to apply specific regions of interest (ROIs), which measure the exact temperature of an area for comparison – not just *looking* hotter or cooler. It is also capable of changing color palettes, which provides black and white images for better vascular visualization. Adhering to proper thermographic protocol is vitally important.

Lastly, you’ll want to be assured that both the technician and reporting thermologist are experienced and more than qualified by one or more of the true thermographic boards (not a “board” established to support, train users and sell one camera).

Everyone should see themselves in vibrant “living color.” Chances are you’ll benefit greatly.

*Nina Rea is board certified by four boards as a thermographic technician and has been providing medical thermographic imaging since 2003 across North Georgia. She will be offering thermographic screenings at Pathways to Healing on Monday, May 21st. For more information and to schedule an appointment, please contact her at 706-338-3611 or by email at* *Info@PhysioThermsInc.com*