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BREAST CANCER SCREENING GETS BOOST WHEN POTENTIAL LOSS IS POINTED OUT

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., -- Women who are told what they could lose by not being screened for breast cancer were almost seven times more likely to get a mammogram than those not exposed to such a message, according to College of Human Sciences researchers. Framing a message that promotes screening in terms of potential loss, or a “loss-frame” approach, was part of a behavioral research grant funded by the American Cancer Society.

This is the opposite approach to that taken by most public health campaigns, which typically promote the benefits of proper health behaviors, said Doris Abood, NFES associate professor, and Ann Mullis, FCS associate professor. Failing to address the consequences of NOT engaging in certain health behaviors may create complacency in people about their health, the researchers found.

The six-month study focused on medically underinsured and uninsured women in rural Florida, who were informed of the risks for the development of breast cancer, the efficacy of mammography, and the possible consequences of not taking this recommended action for the early detection of breast cancer when they called to inquire about free mammograms.

The results of this study are published in the December 2002 issue of Cancer Detection and Prevention.