Palmar Angle of Tri-Radius Measurement for Breast Cancer Screening in Women: Rapid review

This document is a supplement to the rapid policy brief on the issue.

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Contributions of authors
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Conceptualisation, methodology, review drafts and editing – Soumyadeep Bhaumik
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Stakeholder engagement, review drafts and editing – Priyanka Shah
Review draft and editing - Devaki Nambiar

Competing interests
The authors do not have any relevant competing interests.

Acknowledgements
This gratis rapid evidence synthesis was made possible due to the support from World Health Organisation, Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research. The funder did not have a role in drafting, revising or approving the content of the policy brief.

The authors would also like to acknowledge and thank the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis (AIGGPA) and Mr Madan Mohan Upadhyay, and Dr Kanika Sharma. We would also like to thank Dr Kanika Sharma for her input on the policy brief and supplement document.

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Suggested citation
List of abbreviations
AIGGPA - Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis
ATD – Angle of Tri-radius
CBE – Clinical Breast Examination
DTA – Diagnostic Test Accuracy
HWC – Health and Wellness Centre
MP – Madhya Pradesh
NCDs – Non-Communicable Diseases
NPCDCS - National Program for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular
Diseases and Stroke
PIRD – Population, Index test, Reference test, Diagnosis of interest
RES – Rapid Evidence Synthesis
SHSRC – State Health Systems and Resource Centre
USG – Ultra Sonography
Executive Summary

Breast cancer is a commonly reported cancer among women in India, with an annual incidence of approximately 1,44,000. India’s National Program for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) mandates breast cancer screening for all women above 30 years of age through clinical breast examination (CBE) followed by ultra-sonography (USG) (with mammography if available in women aged over 35 years). However, there are resource implications and implementation challenges with the use of existing breast cancer screening methods. Therefore, there is a need to examine alternative cost-effective and non-invasive screening methods for breast cancer. We received a request to conduct a rapid evidence synthesis (RES) from the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis (AIGGPA), Madhya Pradesh to examine evidence on the angle of tri-radius measurement (ATD-angle) for screening breast cancer in women. The ATD-angle is a quantitative parameter of dermatoglyphics, which involves the study of epidermal ridges and patterns on palms and soles.

The primary objective of this RES was to identify and summarise evidence on the diagnostic test accuracy of palmar ATD-angle measurement for breast cancer screening in women. The specific aim was to examine the utility of ATD-angle in clearly identifying patients with breast cancer (sensitivity), as well as those without the condition (specificity). The evidence around cost-benefits and barriers and enablers to utilisation of this test was considered for examination only in the presence of confirmatory diagnostic accuracy of the test. We conducted a rapid review and searched for published and unpublished studies on diagnostic accuracy of ATD-angle, as the first step. Two reviewers independently screened all citations and reviewed full text articles of selected studies based on pre-specified inclusion criteria.

Overall, we identified 108 studies in our searches. Following a study selection process, 44 studies were deemed eligible for full text retrieval and examination. We were able to retrieve full texts of 38 studies. None of the studies met our pre-specified eligibility criteria for measuring the diagnostic accuracy of the test. Studies were excluded because of their focus on other populations of interest, unavailability of comparative methods of screening (reference tests), lack of detail on sensitivity and specificity of the test, and study designs not matching our criteria.

This RES highlighted the lack of evidence on the diagnostic accuracy of ATD-angle measurement as a screening tool for breast cancer in women. Further, the RES did not identify any studies that examined the costs, barriers or enablers for utilising ATD-angle measurement. The RES has identified the need to conduct a pilot study using a rigorous and an appropriate study design to understand the sensitivity, specificity and costs of ATD-angle measurement in relation to existing community screening modalities for breast cancer. Based on available evidence, we cannot recommend for or against the use of ATD-angle measurement for breast cancer screening in women. Future studies should consider measuring the sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle measurement by comparing it existing reference screening methods.
1. Background

Breast cancer is a malignant tumor of the mammary glands. According to Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the India has approximately 1,44,000 new cases a year. (1) Breast cancer is the most commonly reported cancer among women, particularly in urban India. (1, 2) There are several risk factors for breast cancer in women, which include: age, genetic mutations, family history, estrogen and progesterone exposure, geographical and social factors, radiotherapy, and lifestyle factors. (3-5)

The ICMR suggests that the threshold for adopting a screening method in routine practice should be based on the strength of evidence for long term clinical and cost benefits, as well as resource implications. (1, 2) The National Programme for the Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) recommends effective primary screening for breast cancer among women as a key strategy. (2) The current guidelines recommend the use of Clinical Breast Examination (CBE), followed by Ultra Sonography (USG) in CBE positive cases. Mammography is recommended in women above 35 years of age, in addition to USG, if available. In suspected cases of malignancy, core biopsy or fine needle cytology is recommended to confirm diagnosis. (2)

Diagnostic tests are an essential component of health care, and policy makers are usually interested to know if testing improves population outcomes. Well-designed diagnostic test accuracy studies could help in making these decisions. **Diagnostic accuracy** is the ability of a test to clearly differentiate between patients who have the target condition of interest and those who do not. Ideally, the accuracy of a test is determined by comparing the results of the index test (test under evaluation) with those of a reference test on the same series of patients. (6-9) Diagnostic test accuracy is predominantly represented by two measures, sensitivity and specificity. The **sensitivity** of a test is its ability to correctly identify people who have the disease (i.e. the proportion of all patients with disease identified as positive by the test). (6-9) The **specificity** of a test is its ability to correctly identify patients without the disease (i.e. the proportion of all patients without disease identified as negative by the test). (6-9)

The most valid study design for assessing the accuracy of diagnostic tests is a cross-sectional study design that compares an index test with a reference test in the same study population. (6-8) Diagnostic case–control studies (patients with and without the disease are identified before the index test is performed), have been shown to provide larger estimates compared to a single series of consecutive patients to evaluate the same test. (6-8)

Dermatoglyphics is the scientific study of epidermal ridge patterns in palms, finger tips and soles, which is reported to be unique to every individual. Dermatoglyphic pattern variations
have been studied in patients with genetic diseases like Down’s syndrome, schizophrenia, and certain cancer types, like, breast and ovarian cancer.(3, 4) Dermatoglyphics may include the study of qualitative and/or quantitative parameters. The ATD-angle, a quantitative parameter is a widely used method in dermatoglyphics. The more distal the position of t, the larger is the ATD-angle. The ATD-angle is formed by the lines drawn between the triradii below the first and last digits and the most proximal triradius on the hypothenar region of the palm.(3-5, 10-12)

Rapid evidence synthesis (RES) is an emergent research approach undertaken to provide synthesised information in short timeframes for decision making.

The primary objective of this RES was to determine the diagnostic accuracy of ATD-angle measurement compared to clinical breast examination/mammography as a reference test for breast cancer screening in women. The secondary objectives were:

a. To summarise the evidence on the costs of ATD-angle measurement for breast cancer screening.

b. To summarise barriers and facilitators for utilisation and acceptability of providers and recipients of ATD measurement for breast cancer screening (for example over diagnosis and overtreatment, anxiety, and pain).

2. Methods

This section describes the methods used in the development of the policy brief.

Inclusion Criteria (PIRDS)
We included studies, which met the following criteria.

Population
Our population of interest was women aged 30 years and above, as defined by relevant national guidelines. If there were studies conducted with a wider age group, we included them only if the mean or median age of included participants was more than 30. If age is specifically not reported we will still include, provided the studies are conducted in adult women.

Index test
Index test is the diagnostic test whose accuracy was investigated, which in this case was ‘angle of tri-radius measurement.’

Reference test
Reference test is the gold standard test (clinical breast examination alone or in conjunction with ultrasonography/ mammography) to which the results of the index test were compared.

Diagnosis of interest
The diagnosis of interest was breast cancer as confirmed by histocytology/mammography.
Study designs
We identified primary diagnostic test accuracy studies in which all participants were subjected to both index and reference test and compared with a confirmatory diagnosis. The study types primarily included cross-sectional studies and diagnostic case-control studies that reported measures of interest.

Search methods
A comprehensive search was conducted to identify published studies and grey literature (unpublished/unindexed) involving human subjects, and those available in the English language. There was no date restriction for the search. The following databases and grey literature sources were searched for the relevant studies of interest. Detailed search strategies for each database are provided in Appendix 1 for each database.

Electronic databases searched included:
- Medline (PubMed)
- CINAHL
- Cochrane Library
- EMBASE
- ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global

Grey literature sources searched included:
- Google Scholar
- WHOLIS - WHO Library Database (http://kohahq.searo.who.int/)
- WorldCat (https://www.worldcat.org/)

Data collection and analysis
Selection of studies
The titles and abstracts of studies for inclusion were screened, which then enabled retrieval of full texts of eligible studies for examination and selection. Two reviewers independently applied the inclusion criteria to the retrieved publications. Discrepancy, if any was resolved by consensus.

Assessment of risk of bias in included studies
Risk of bias was not assessed because there were no eligible studies for inclusion. We planned to use standardised checklists to appraise the quality of studies.
Data extraction
Relevant data was not extracted as there were no eligible studies for inclusion. Reasons for exclusion of articles were provided by two authors independently. Discrepancy, if any was resolved by consensus.

Data Synthesis
A narrative summary, aided by tables wherever possible is presented to address the review question/s and document relevant findings. We planned to use the GRADE approach for assessing the certainty of evidence and where applicable, using a summary of findings table.

3. Results

Description of studies

Search Results and Study Selection
Overall, the literature search identified 108 studies. Thirty seven studies were identified as duplicates and excluded. Following this step, 71 studies were screened based on their title and abstracts. Based on the pre-specified inclusion criteria, 44 studies (a majority of them published after year 2000) were considered potentially eligible for inclusion in the report. Full texts of 38 studies were available for examination. On full-text examination of these studies, none were considered relevant and/or eligible for inclusion in this policy brief. Majority of the excluded studies used inappropriate study design (case-control) and/or did not compare ATD-angle measurement (sensitivity/specificity) with a standard screening method to examine diagnostic test accuracy. Figure 1 depicts the study selection through the different phases of a review, using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) statement.(13)

For policy decision-makers to promote the use of a new diagnostic (index) test, evidence is required that using the new test increases test accuracy over existing reference tests, or has equivalent accuracy (but offer cost/implementation advantage). Therefore, studies should conduct comparative analyses of the index and the reference/s tests, and not focus on evaluating the diagnostic accuracy of a test in isolation.
Figure 1: PRISMA Study Selection Flow Chart (13)

Records identified through database (n=108)

Records after duplicates removed (n=71)

Records screened (n=71)

Records excluded based on titles and abstract screening (n=27)

Full text assessed for eligibility (n=44)

Studies excluded on full text examination (n=38)

Full texts not available (n=6)

Studies included (n=0)
Summary of excluded studies

The following section briefly summarises the findings from excluded studies that used ATD—angle measurement for breast cancer screening in women. A list of excluded studies with reasons for exclusion is provided in Appendix 2. Overall, 16 out of 44 studies examined the use of ATD-angle for breast cancer screening in women.(3-5, 10-12, 14-23) Majority of the studies were conducted in India (n=12), a couple from Eastern Europe, and one each from Italy and Nigeria. The studies in India were conducted in the following States and Union Territories: Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.(3, 4, 10, 12, 14-17, 19-22) A couple of studies were conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina,(5, 18) one study in Nigeria,(11), and one in Italy.(23) The studies compared the use of ATD-angle measurement in women with breast cancer (cases) with healthy controls, i.e. women without breast cancer. Breast cancer in the case group was mostly confirmed histopathologically. Essentially, the studies examined the association between dermatoglyphic traits, including ATD-angle and breast cancer. The palmar impressions in the studies were taken to determine the ATD-angle, which was generally measured using a protractor.

The results from excluded studies indicated that there was a significantly wider ATD-angle or an increase in the angle in the group of breast cancer patients compared to the healthy controls.(5, 10, 11, 16, 18, 19, 22) This suggested that the women were probably at-risk of breast cancer. However, a few studies showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the ATD angle between the two groups.(12, 23)

Overall, there was mixed evidence on the utility of ATD-angle measurement as a tool for non-invasive screening of breast cancer in women, particularly in women at an increased risk (e.g. positive family history). Further, a majority of the studies conducted in India reported that this non-invasive screening tool could prove to be useful in resource-poor settings and/or rural settings. However, authors concluded that further large scale studies are required to confirm the findings.

5. Policy options

- Research done so far on ATD-angle measurement for breast cancer did not use appropriate and rigorous study designs to test its diagnostic accuracy. Specifically, the studies did not measure the required parameters (sensitivity and specificity) to understand if ATD-angle measurement could be used instead of CBE (alone or in conjunction with USG/mammography) for community screening.
- Decision-makers may consider prioritising funding for a pilot study to assess the diagnostic accuracy of ATD-angle measurement for breast cancer screening in women using an appropriate study design.
6. Recommendations for future research

- Future studies in this area should use a cross-sectional study design, and evaluate the sensitivity and specificity of palmar ATD-angle against a reference standard test (CBE alone or in conjunction with USG/ mammography) in the same cohort of women (i.e. all women >30 years who undergo both the ATD-angle measurement and the reference standard test, along with confirmation by gold standard test).
- Case–control study designs are generally not representative of a test’s accuracy in clinical practice, in that they overestimate the accuracy of the test. Cross-sectional study designs are generally the preferred study designs to provide valid estimates of diagnostic accuracy.
- A greater commitment for collaboration between policy makers, researchers and oncogeneticists will likely improve the evidence base to help formulate robust policy recommendations.

7. Strengths and Limitations of the policy brief

- In terms of its strengths, this RES is a first of its kind to examine the evidence on an emerging diagnostic modality for breast cancer screening in women. The review was comprehensive in terms of the robust methods utilised, and the search strategies employed. Further, the reviewers engaged with stakeholders, including content experts throughout the RES process.
- This RES is limited by the quality and availability of primary diagnostic test accuracy studies that addressed and reported on the main measures of the test; i.e. sensitivity and specificity.

8. Next steps

Further dialogue and engagement with relevant actors is recommended, particularly in relation to further pursuing research that may inform decisions. Dissemination and circulation of the policy brief report to key actors may support this.

9. References

2. National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer D, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke. Training Module for Medical Officers for Prevention, Control and Population Level Screening of Hypertension, Diabetes and Common Cancer (Oral, Breast &
3. Edward I. Study of Palmar Dermatoglyphics in Breast Cancer Patients. Ann Arbor: Dr. NTR University of Health Sciences (India); 2011.
10. Appendix

Appendix 1: Search Strategies

**MEDLINE (PubMed)**

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**CINAHL**

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<td>#2</td>
<td>MH health screening OR TX “mass screening” OR TX screening</td>
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<td>#3</td>
<td>TX “angle of tri radius” OR TX dermatoglyphic* OR TX axial triradius OR TX “ATD-angle”</td>
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### Cochrane Library

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### ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global

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### Other Grey (Unpublished) Literature Sources Searched

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### Appendix 2. List of Excluded Studies with Reasons for Exclusion

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● Qualitative parameters of dermatoglyphics used  
● Whorls and loops |
● Qualitative parameters of dermatoglyphics used  
● Whorls, loops and arches |
| 3   | Ajeena EH. Study the advantage of dermatoglyphics in detecting women with breast cancer. Magazine of Al-Kufa University for Biology. 2015;7(3):1-13. | ● Qualitative parameters of dermatoglyphics used  
● Whorls, loops and arches  
● Insignificant results |
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<th></th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Journal/Source</th>
<th>Details</th>
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- Case-control study  
- Qualitative: whorls, loops and arches  
- Quantitative: a-b, b-c and c-d ridge counts, t-d ridge count, total finger ridge count (TFRC), **atd angle**  
- Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured  
- Results were significant for whorls (qualitative)  
- Total finger ridge count (TFRC), **atd angle** and t-d ridge count were **statistically significant**. |
- Accidentals, transitionals, horizontal and angled ulnar loops, angled radial loops significantly associated with breast cancer                                                                                   |
| 8. | Chen Y, Zhang H.                                                          | A dermatoglyphic study of the Minnan people of Taiwan. 2007.                  | - Full text not available                                                                                                                                                                                |
- Both quantitative and qualitative parameters measured.  
- Quantitative: mean ridge count and mean pattern intensity index used  
- Qualitative: whorls, loops and arches  
- Results were significant for both quantitative and qualitative parameters                                                                 |
- Both quantitative and qualitative parameters of measured.  
- Quantitative: mean ridge count and mean pattern intensity index used                                                                                                                                    |
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| 18  | Haggag AA. Study of fingerprints pattern in breast cancer patients in sharkia governorate, a case–control retrospective clinical study. Zagazig university medical journal. 2018;24(1). | - No comparative method of screening reported  
- Both quantitative and qualitative parameters measured  
- Qualitative: whorls, loops and arches  
- Quantitative: Ridge counts  
- Whorls, ridge counts: Significant |
| 19  | Karthikeyan G. A study on dermatoglyphic pattern in women with breast cancer. 2013. | - No comparative method of screening reported  
- Both quantitative and qualitative parameters measured (ATD, dat and adt angles, a-b ridge count)  
- Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured  
- ATD-angle showed no statistical significance |
- Both quantitative and qualitative parameters measured  
- Total finger ridge count (TFRC), absolute finger ridge count (AFRC), a-b ridge count, ATD-angle  
- Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured  
- A significant association of ATD-angle less than 45 degree. |
- Both quantitative and qualitative parameters measured  
- Total finger ridge count (TFRC), a-b ridge count, Palmar ATD-angle  
- Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured |
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<td>A significant association of ATD-angle</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Only first page of the full text available</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Other quantitative parameters measured: total finger ridge count (TFRC), main line index</td>
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<td>Qualitative and quantitative parameters studied including ATD-angle of right and left hands</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case-control study design with health controls</td>
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<tr>
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<td>ATD-angle significantly decreased when compared with the control group in both right and left hands.</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>Study conducted in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ATD L—the angle of the triangle a, t and d on the left palm, measured in degrees</td>
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<table>
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<th>Study Location</th>
<th>Case-Control Study Design</th>
<th>Parameters Examined</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Musanovic J, Metovic A, Hursremovic F, Bejic S, Haskovic A, Babic A, et al.</td>
<td>Digital dermatoglyphics in the evaluation of the genetic basis of breast cancer in Bosnian-Herzegovinian population - quantitative analysis. Med Glas (Zenica). 2020; 17(1).</td>
<td>Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Case-control study with healthy controls</td>
<td>Quantitative parameters examined except ATD-angle</td>
<td>ATD-angle was higher in the case group of breast cancer patients compared to the control group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Natekar PE, DeSouza FM.</td>
<td>Fluctuating asymmetry in dermatoglyphics of carcinoma of breast. Indian Journal of Human Genetics. 2006;12(2):76-81.</td>
<td>Goa, India</td>
<td>Case-control study with healthy controls</td>
<td>ATD-angle not measured</td>
<td>ATD-angle was higher in the breast cancer patients</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Study Details</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative and quantitative parameters examined  
ATD angle was not measured |
Qualitative and quantitative parameters examined including atd angle  
Objective and outcome/s not relevant |
Qualitative and quantitative parameters examined including ATD-angle  
No comparative screening test  
Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured  
Case-control study design with healthy controls |
Qualitative and quantitative parameters examined including ATD-angle  
No comparative screening test  
Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured  
Case-control study design with healthy controls |
No significant association was reported with breast cancer |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 39. | Sridevi N. Cross sectional study of palmar dermatoglyphic pattern in patients with carcinoma breast: RGUHS; 2006. | - Study conducted in Bengaluru, India  
- Qualitative and quantitative parameters examined including ATD-angle  
- No comparative screening test  
- Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured  
- Case-control study design with age-matched controls |
- Qualitative and quantitative parameters examined including ATD-angle  
- No comparative screening test  
- Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured  
- Case-control study design with age-matched controls |
- No comparative screening test  
- Sensitivity and specificity of ATD-angle not measured  
- Case-control study design with age-matched controls |
| 42. | Vishwanath G, Mascarennas A. Dermatoglyphic analysis of Breast Cancer patients from Bangalore institute of Oncology. Bangalore; 2002. | - Full text not available |
- atd angle was not measured  
- Palmar ridge count measured |
- atd angle was not measured  
- Finger ridge count measured |