

MEDICAL STUDENT GUIDE TO BREAST IMAGING

What is breast imaging?

Breast imaging is a radiology subspecialty using mammography, ultrasound, and MRI to diagnose breast conditions. Breast imagers perform biopsies, guide treatment, assess response, and support surgical planning and follow-up care in collaboration with clinicians.

TYPICAL CASES:

Breast imagers diagnose a range of conditions, from benign issues like fibroadenomas, cysts, and mastitis, to malignancies such as invasive ductal and lobular carcinoma, DCIS, and inflammatory breast cancer. They may also detect non-breast cancers like lymphoma or metastases.

TYPICAL PROCEDURES:

Breast Imager Procedures:

- Perform biopsies guided by ultrasound, mammography, or MRI
- Use fine needle aspiration for cysts or abscesses to relieve symptoms or guide treatment

Surgical Support:

- Place localization devices (e.g., wires, seeds, reflectors) to guide surgeons to non-palpable tumors
- Ensure accurate targeting for successful tumor removal

WHERE DO THEY WORK?

Breast imagers work in outpatient settings, combining diagnostics, procedures, and patient interaction. Some cases can be read remotely.

HOW TO BECOME ONE?

Path to Becoming a Breast Imager:

- 4 years medical school
- 1-year internship (medicine, surgery, or transitional)
- 4 years diagnostic radiology residency
- 1-year breast imaging fellowship
 - Some combine with women's or body imaging

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

- **SBI RFS:** (Resident and Fellow Section) Free membership, educational resources, newsletters, and committee opportunities
- **RSNA MSTF:** (Radiological Society of North America Medical Student Task Force) is comprised of medical students from a global student group with projects in education, research, wellness, and DEI
- **AUR Committees:** (Association of University Radiologists) Open to students, focusing on diversity, education, research, and wellness



SOCIETY OF
BREAST IMAGING
SINCE 1985

WHY WOULD A RADIOLOGIST CHOOSE BREAST IMAGING?



“For me, breast imaging allows me to cultivate my passion for both diagnostic and interventional radiology while highlighting my own strengths guiding patients through their care journey. Whether it is routine screening or the day of surgery, patients are often nervous about the possibilities. I cherish the unique responsibility and honor of providing them support and education along with excellent care.”

– Brian Xavier, M.D.



“Hard conversations with patients are frequent in breast imaging, and I have a passion for being able to empathetically give patients hard news while still giving them encouragement about the next steps in their care.”

– Wynton Bryce Overcast, M.D.



“Being able to join the fight against one of the most common cancers affecting women in the United States, where the lifetime risk of developing breast cancer is 1 in 8.”

– Eda Dou, M.D.