

# What's new in breast cancer screening technology

Alice Crann Good, News Journal correspondent 10:28 p.m. CDT October 22, 2014



(Photo: Special to the News Journal)

The American Cancer Society reports that research into the causes, prevention, screening/diagnosing and treatment of breast cancer is ongoing at many medical centers worldwide.

What's great for us is some of the most sophisticated imaging methods are being used right here in Pensacola.

"Realistically, we have fantastic health resources and centers here. All have the capability of excellence in mammography, and all modalities are available here," said Dr. John Ervin, associate professor with Florida State University/College of Medicine/Obstetrics & Gynecology Residency Program/Sacred Heart Health System.

"Because of new technology, we have been able to have earlier and earlier detection," said Ervin, who is also a volunteer with the Panhandle American Cancer Society. "So, less invasive surgery has been necessary.

"Go back 20 years ago, and the average mass was three to four centimeters, a big mass that required big surgery. The trend is we are finding breast cancer earlier, which means less invasive surgeries. Less invasive is a good thing."

## Pensacola at the forefront

Baptist Health Care is using one of the newest technologies — digital breast tomosynthesis or 3-D digital mammography.

This technology takes advantage of all the benefits of digital mammography to create unparalleled high-quality images, producing more precise and detailed images from various angles. These images can be reconstructed to create a 3-D view of the breast, allowing doctors to examine the inner architecture of the breast without distortion, which can lead to earlier detection of abnormalities when breast cancer is most treatable.

Benefits of 3-D digital mammography: Improved accuracy and detection; clearer images that show structures in the breast and their spatial relationship with the surrounding breast tissue; ability to detect breast cancer very early; tomosynthesis scans can be performed quickly; confidence to rule out cancer without recalling the patient for further study.

"One of the persistent criticisms of mammography is the anxiety felt by women who are called back from a screening for additional views," said Dr. Vashti Hellein, a member of Radiology Associates-Pensacola and an independent member of the medical staff at Baptist Hospital.

"With 3-D mammography, multiple studies demonstrate an increased cancer detection rate combined with a decreased patient recall rate," Hellein said. "We are fortunate to have this exceptional technology available to the community at multiple Baptist Health Care facilities."

Further study is ongoing to delineate which patients will benefit from the 3-D technology — i.e., young women, women with dense breasts, women with a strong family history of breast cancer or any women needing a screening, Hellein said.

"The most important message about mammography is that screening for breast cancer saves lives. Period," Hellein said. "We are fortunate in this country to have it widely available and are extremely fortunate to have it in our community."

## Exploring all options

Dr. Donald Farmer, medical director of the Ann L. Baroco Center for Breast Health at Sacred Heart Women's Hospital, said, "Basically, we are all trying to cover every base we can to detect breast cancer, and because of today's technology, our ability to cure breast cancer is so much greater."

With that goal ultimately in mind, Farmer said the Baroco Center is using a leading breast cancer screening — the automated breast ultrasound system (ABUS). ABUS is a new approach to finding up to 30 percent more cancers in women who have dense breast tissue.

Women with extremely dense breast tissue have a four to six times greater risk of developing breast cancer than women who do not have dense breast tissue, Farmer said. While mammography remains the gold standard for early detection, finding cancers in women with dense breast tissue can be limited with mammography alone.

Unlike mammography, which uses radiation, ABUS uses sound waves to create 3-D pictures of the breast tissue.

"It provides us a reproducible technique," Farmer said. Radiologists can look through hundreds of breast tissue image "slices," looking at layers of dense tissue to find breast cancers that may have been missed on a mammogram.

Benefits of ABUS: No radiation; clearer images of breast tissue; scanning process lasts less than 60 seconds; screening takes less than 15 minutes, providing your doctor with state-of-the art 3-D ultrasound images regardless of breast density.

For many years, mammograms that recorded images of the breast on film were the only option. Now, digital mammograms are readily available. Digital mammograms store and analyze information using a computer.

All health care systems in Pensacola — including Baptist, Sacred Heart, Santa Rosa Medical Center, West Florida Hospital and Woodlands Medical Specialists — use digital mammography to find cancer in its early stages, said Dr. Joanne Bujnoski, Panhandle American Cancer Society Volunteer Leadership Council chair.

"Women should avail themselves to all of this great technology," said Bujnoski, a retired radiation oncologist who treated breast cancer for more than 30 years.

"We are fortunate," Ervin adds. "We are not in a small, rural community with limited access and antiquated systems. Our challenge, though, is to increase our screening rate for eligible women — especially women in medically underserved communities."

### **Get involved Saturday**

- **WHAT:** Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Mall Walk
- **WHEN:** Registration begins 7 a.m. Saturday. Walk begins 8 a.m. Saturday.
- **WHERE:** The 5K route begins and ends at Cordova Mall, 5100 N. Ninth Ave.
- **WHY:** This annual event floods the streets of Pensacola in pink, bringing together cancer survivors, their family and friends, business partners, and community members in an effort to end breast cancer. All proceeds go to breast cancer awareness.
- **REGISTER:** [makingstrides.acsevents.org](http://makingstrides.acsevents.org), [sally.cary@cancer.org](mailto:sally.cary@cancer.org) or call 850-475-0850.

### **MAKE THE CALL**

To schedule an appointment for your mammogram:

- Angel Williamson Imaging Center, 850-476-1161.
- Baptist Health Care, 850-469-7500.
- Sacred Heart Women's Hospital/Ann L. Baroco Center for Breast Health, 850-416-8078.
- Santa Rosa Medical Center/The Women's Place, 850-626-5272.
- West Florida Hospital/Mobile Mammography Unit, 888-894-2113, ext. 1. For the mobile unit's schedule, [www.westfloridahospital.com/patients/mobile-mammography-unit.dot](http://www.westfloridahospital.com/patients/mobile-mammography-unit.dot).
- Woodlands Medical Specialists/Breast Health Services, 850-696-4000.

### **Mammograms at the PNJ**

We want to make getting your mammogram easier.

West Florida's Mobile Mammography Unit will be parked at the Pensacola News Journal, 2 North Palafox St., from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today during the PNJ's Get Pink community day.

The customized 37-foot coach contains dedicated mammography equipment and provides comprehensive mammography services that feature an all-female staff of nationally certified and licensed technologists and state-of-the-art equipment. All mammograms are read by two board certified radiologists.

West Florida Hospital files most insurances, including Medicare. Medicare will cover screening mammograms every year with no deductible for clients

older than 40. Walk-ins are accepted, but appointments are recommended. For more information, call 1-888-894-2113, Ext. 1

During Get Pink, the PNJ encourages the community to show off their pink spirit. If your office or business is decked out in pink, send your photos to [online@pnj.com](mailto:online@pnj.com) to be featured online. If you have special plans, call Katie King at 435-8535.

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