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Nuclear cardiology lab reaccredited

POCATELLO — Ron Cuoio manipulated a giant camera that moves around a reclining table where a patient would normally sit. The camera takes photos of a patient’s heart and is so sensitive it sometimes “shuts off with just a bare cough.”

The camera is used in the nuclear medicine laboratory inside the Portneuf Heart and Vascular Center, located at the Portneuf Medical Center campus at 777 Hospital Way.

After three years providing nuclear cardiology testing for patients at Portneuf Medical Center, the nuclear laboratory was reaccredited within the past few weeks for three more years through the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Nuclear Medicine Laboratories.

Cuoio, a nuclear laboratory technician, said patients are hooked up to an electrocardiogram which sends messages to the specialized camera.

Ron Cuoio, a nuclear medicine tech at Portneuf Medical Center, demonstrates a new method to scan for heart disease.

“That tells the camera to move with their heart rate. It moves in intervals, imaging constantly throughout the cycle,” Cuoio said.

Dr. Benjamin Call, a cardiologist and certified nuclear cardiologist, said when the department was first accredited in 2008, it was among the first certified labs in the United States.

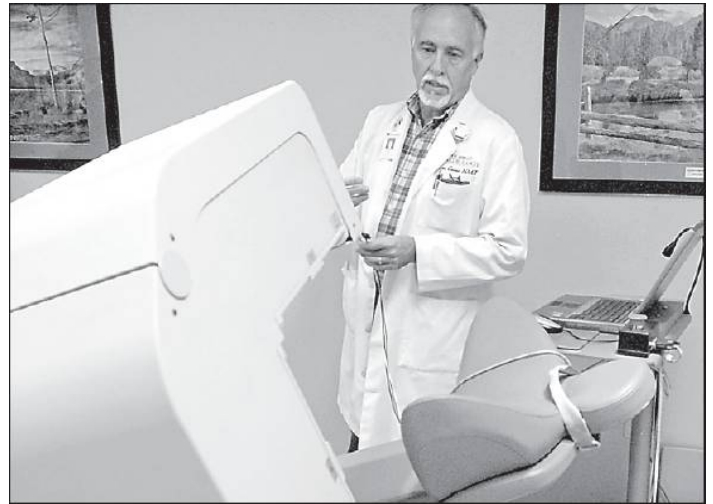
“This is kind of a stamp of approval of certification that says, ‘They do their nuclear testing part of what we do here, as well as it can be done,’” Call said. “That is really our philosophy, that whatever it is, we’re going to do it as well as possible.”

Call said nuclear testing is a much more efficient way to test a patient’s heart and is 85 percent accurate.

On average, the department does testing for about 1,000 patients a year and as many as six patients per day. Inside the facility are several rooms including consultation, stress testing and the nuclear testing, and some of the walls are adorned with a few of Cuoio’s photographs.

Once the images are processed, doctors can look at the various still and moving images of a heart to analyze strength and function. “We have the ability to look at it while it’s moving, and we can see the heart beating and measure the strength of the heart,” Call said, motioning images on a computer to a screen.

Call said elements that contribute to maintaining a high standard of service involve technical elements including documentation, a patient being properly positioned, imaging and reporting.



“What this means is that we have strived to maintain top quality and will continue to do so,” Call said. “The fact that this is where we offer a nuclear program really reflects on the fact that this is where we are with the cardiac program. We’ve strived to make sure that what we do is the very best. If we do it we are going to do as well as it can be done anywhere.”