

## New 3D mammogram machine gives fuller picture at Gooding hospital

GOODING — Jamie Ramsey turned on the screen attached to the new 3-D mammogram machine at North Canyon Medical Center. As Ramsey, the quality assurance mammographer at the hospital, clicked through the slides, the X-ray of a patient's breast went in and out of focus and she pointed out some of the changing details of the breast tissue as the picture changed.

Ramsey was demonstrating the digital breast tomosynthesis, or 3-D mammography machine, that the hospital got earlier this year. The new machine gives a more complete view of a patient's breast than a traditional two-dimensional X-ray.

"We are able to look at the breast as if it were cut into slices, if you will," Ramsey said.

The 3-D imaging gives a much clearer view of superimposed breast tissue and is especially helpful for women with denser breast tissue. She also compared it to a magazine — the cover just gives you one view of what's inside, while each page tells a slightly different story.

"We are getting multiple images of the breast as opposed to a two-dimensional image," she said.

This can both pick up on small tumors and earlier-stage cancers that a two-dimensional mammogram could miss and also reduces the number of cases where women have to go back for further testing for what turns out to be normal breast tissue, said Dr. Cameron Evans, chief of radiology at St. Luke's Magic Valley and Jerome. This, he said, can cause women a great deal of anxiety and sometimes require a biopsy before doctors determine the lesion benign.

"As soon as we tell a patient that, they're really concerned that they have breast cancer," he said. "The majority of them don't have breast cancer, but they have to go through the workup process."

The federal Food and Drug Administration approved the technology in 2011, and 3-D mammography has been growing more common since then.

St. Luke's offers 3-D mammograms at Wood River Valley Medical Center in Ketchum and is gearing up now for a \$1 million fundraising campaign to buy tomosynthesis equipment for its Twin Falls and Jerome facilities. St. Luke's has already started to fundraise internally and is planning to launch the campaign publicly in October, said Amy Schutte, chief gifts officer for the St. Luke's Magic Valley Health Foundation.

Schutte said the money raised at a golf tournament in June and at the yearly "Epicurean Evening" dinner in October would go toward the effort, and that the hospital would also be soliciting help from both major and smaller donors and looking for grants.

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**by Nathan Brown**

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Ramsey said North Canyon has done about 80 3-D mammograms since it started to offer them in mid-February. One of them was Bev MacFee.

“I have to say I went more years than I should have, then I came and saw Jamie,” MacFee said.

The Gooding woman has a family history of breast cancer. When she was 28, her mother paid for her first mammogram, for MacFee and her other daughters.

“She had three girls and all three of us went in,” MacFee said.

MacFee’s experiences with mammograms often weren’t positive. The last time she got one, she said, it bruised her breasts and she had to come back for an ultrasound test. A thousand dollars later, she found out it was just a cyst.

MacFee’s daughter, who works at the hospital, told her about the new machine and she came in for a mammogram earlier this year. She said it was different than past times.

“I didn’t feel any pain,” she said.

MacFee said she even convinced a friend of hers, who had sworn never to get another mammogram, to come in for one.

Ramsey said she tries to make the experience as pleasant and relaxing as possible. One way is by playing music for her patients. Sometimes, she said, her patients get emotional as they talk about themselves or their family histories.

“It’s a safe place just to let that go if we need to,” she said.

Most health insurance plans cover 3-D mammography now, Schutte said, but there are still some that don’t. While the Affordable Care Act mandated increased coverage of mammograms and other preventive services, Your Health Idaho spokeswoman Karla Haun said 3-D mammograms are not considered an “essential health benefit,” which leaves it up to insurance carriers to decide whether to cover them. Ramsey said North Canyon offers some financial assistance programs for patients whose insurance doesn’t cover it.

North Canyon raised much of the money for the machine through the hospital’s yearly “Tough Enough to Wear Pink” fundraiser. Ramsey also credited North Canyon CEO Tim Powers, saying he is “very forward-thinking and he has a great relationship with our vendors.”

Schutte said she was excited St. Luke’s fundraising effort would also provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the need for breast cancer screening. Idaho has one of the lowest screening rates in the country — some years, it has been the lowest.

“It’s a little embarrassing,” Evans said. “We’re worse than Mississippi and some of the Southern states for screening mammogram rates.”

Getting screened means cancer can be caught earlier, Evans said, increasing the chances the patient will live.

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“This provides us a great way to be getting the message out to our ladies here in the Magic Valley,” Schutte said.

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