The time is NOW

“3D is making a difference for patients. We’re seeing masses that we could not see on a 2D exam. We’re also seeing more patients because we have 3D technology. We couldn’t be more thrilled.”

Patricia Shapiro, M.D., SouthCoast Imaging

Hottest Clinical Procedure
Breast tomosynthesis chosen by AuntMinnie’s expert panel as the hottest clinical procedure of the year for the fourth year in a row.

“Providers who are considering tomosynthesis would benefit by quickly jumping on the bandwagon.”

KLAS Breast Tomosynthesis 2013: The Business Case

For references and answers to questions on tomosynthesis, please e-mail us at tomoinfo@hologic.com
From the Editor

There comes a time in the evolution of a new medical technology when everything comes together to show the world the compelling evidence of its worth.

For 3D mammography, that time is now.

The clinical evidence is clear. In numerous large-scale studies, adding 3D mammography to screening exams has been shown to significantly reduce recalls, sparing millions of women around the world the anxiety and cost of being called back for unnecessary testing. The same studies show how 3D mammography significantly increases the detection of cancers, particularly invasive breast cancers, allowing life-saving treatment to begin earlier.

The medical industry recognizes the value of the technology. AuntMinnie named 3D mammography the Hottest Clinical Procedure of 2013, for an unprecedented fourth year in a row. And, in the 2013 KLAS® annual customer satisfaction survey of medical imaging products, the Hologic 3D mammography system received the highest rating out of all of the 140 imaging products evaluated, as well as being ranked first in the digital mammography category.

More and more women are becoming aware of the benefits of 3D mammography and are seeking out facilities that provide the technology. Referring physicians are increasingly ordering 3D mammograms for their patients, and sending them to sites that can provide what they believe will become the new standard of care in mammography.

Perhaps the most powerful evidence comes from the radiology community, where the adoption of 3D mammography has been overwhelmingly positive. This compilation of stories highlights a few of the breast imaging facilities that have seen the benefits of 3D mammography come to life in the form of improving patient care, drawing new patients to their practice and increasing the confidence of their radiologists.

*Data on file with Hologic, Inc.

The Power to Improve Lives.
The Selenia® Dimensions® tomosynthesis system is transforming breast cancer screening.

Learn more at breasttomo.com
Small Community Hospital in Arizona Distinguishes Itself with Addition of 3D Mammography

In the small rural town of Kingman, AZ – approximately 90 minutes southeast of Las Vegas and a little over three hours north of Phoenix – most of its 28,000-plus population are economically disadvantaged and some still work in local gold and silver mines.

So for women in the area, getting a mammogram every year isn’t a priority; in fact, notes Dr. Christopher Johansen, Kingman Regional Medical Center (KRMC) Radiologist and Director of its Breast Imaging Program, “Many of our residents don’t have health insurance. And many aren’t even aware of the importance of getting annual mammograms.”

That’s why Teri Williams, Communications Director at KRMC, made it her mission to build a breast health practice for the center. She set up Walk Women Health Chuck, a federally funded program to provide clinical breast exams, Pap tests and mammograms for under-insured and uninsured women throughout the region. She wrote and received grants from the Susan G. Komen® Foundation to help fund a program called Health Check, a federally funded program to help women get breast and mammograms for under-insured and uninsured women. She also helped hire a nurse navigator to guide patients through the healthcare process.

Then in September 2011, something happened that would change Teri’s life, along with the lives of hundreds of women in the area. KRMC purchased a Hologic® Selenia® Dimensions™ breast tomosynthesis system, making them just the second hospital in the state and among only a handful in the entire country – to make the technology available to its patients.

Despite the size of Kingman, it’s not surprising that 3D mammography made its way to the rural Northwest corner of the state. In addition to its extensive training in radiology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, Dr. Johansen completed a one-year fellowship in breast imaging at Massachusetts General Hospital, where breast tomosynthesis was first pioneered.

Dr. Johansen explains the reason he pushed KRMC to purchase the technology: “The medical center is a non-profit community hospital; our first priority is to provide for the health of our town and county. In our community, we’re seeing a one percent breast cancer rate, which is much higher than the national average. So we felt that tomosynthesis would have the greatest impact on our community’s health.”

When asked how a rural medical center such as KRMC could afford tomsynthesis, Dr. Johansen says, “First of all, we recognize that it’s the best standard of care for mammography – and that it will be the standard of care for many years to come, so we don’t need to worry about the equipment becoming quickly obsolete. Secondly, the system is not expensive. Centers can even start with a 2D Selenia Dimensions unit, then easily upgrade to 3D with no disruption to their practices. Even as a small community hospital, the Selenia Dimensions system was not a big investment for us – and when you consider the benefits, it has become invaluable.”

Just ask Teri. Her mom is a breast cancer survivor, so Teri knows how important screening exams are and she always had her annual mammogram. And, her mammograms were always read as normal – until her tomosynthesis exam. Says Teri, “I have dense breast tissue, so there was no way 2D mammography could have found my cancer; it was tiny and hidden in layers of tissue.”

Fortunately for Teri, the tumor was still small and had not spread, so her treatment consisted of a lumpectomy. Says Teri, “Thanks to early detection with tomosynthesis, we caught the cancer before it spread anywhere else. It’s crazy; I live and breathe tomosynthesis for everyone else, and then it saved my life.”

Teri is just one of many patients who are grateful to have tomosynthesis available in the community. As Dr. Johansen notes, “We have had other cases with very vague findings on the patient’s 2D mammogram. In the past, our radiologists have had to call women back for additional imaging or biopsies. This is especially important at KRMC because a large percentage of women in the area have never had a mammogram. And many of our residents live here during the winter months only,” notes Dr. Johansen. “Even if they had a mammogram in the past, often their images aren’t available for comparison. Because of the lack of comparison studies, the call-back rate could be extremely high – without tomosynthesis.”

Thanks to the continued efforts of Teri, High Desert Radiology and the entire Imaging Center staff at KRMC, word is out that tomosynthesis is available. “We’re getting a lot of calls from other communities,” says Teri, who adds, “When women hear the ‘C’ word, they naturally feel anxious. But once they get through it – like I have – they understand how curable breast cancer is when it’s found early. That’s the real value of tomosynthesis. It truly is a lifesaver; it saved my own.”

In conclusion, Dr. Johansen says, “We basically went from a population of unscreened women to a populatin now being screened with the most advanced mammography technology available.”

Dr. Christopher Johansen, Radiologist and Director of Breast Imaging Program

“We basically went from a population of unscreened women to a population now being screened with the most advanced mammography technology available.”

Dr. Johansen believes radiologists can be more confident when reading 3D exams.
3D Mammography Provides Earlier Detection, Draws New Patients to Breast Care Center

By all measures the Northwest Indiana Breast Care Center at Methodist Hospitals is a success. Opened in 2012, the Breast Care Center embodies Methodist Hospitals’ commitment to provide the most advanced technologies available for the early detection and treatment of breast cancer. Methodist Hospitals is a not-for-profit, community-based healthcare system with two full-service campuses located 14 miles apart in Gary and Merrillville, Indiana.

The message of earlier detection is making a difference for women in this region. The hospital’s marketing campaign educating women on the value of 3D mammography is bringing many women to the breast center who previously had mammograms elsewhere. “3D has been phenomenal for us,” states Mammography Manager Jennifer Sanders. “In the short time since we acquired 3D mammography, we have seen almost 350 new patients walk through our doors and we anticipate even more this year.”

“3D imaging is about better patient care; that’s really a testimony to the strength of the technology,” concludes Dr. Segel. The benefits of better detection are seen throughout the breast care center, reports Dr. Barai. At the hospital’s monthly breast cancer conferences, radiologists are presenting cases of tumors that are 3 and 4 millimeters in size. “They are more confident when they present a case with a suspicious lesion, which needs to be biopsied, and they are reporting fewer patients require additional images and follow-up.”

Breast radiologist Dr. Kenneth Segel is a strong believer in the 3D mammography technology. “We can see breast tissue a layer at a time, which allows us to sort between things that are real and things that might look suspicious on a 2D image, but are actually just normal, overlapping structures. 3D also improves the sensitivity, enabling us to detect a higher proportion of things that are real. I feel very fortunate to be working at a place where I have this technology. It’s just that good,” explains Segel.
3D Mammography Exceeds Expectations, Improves Patient Outcomes

St. Peter’s Breast Center, located in Albany, New York, added 3D mammography (breast tomosynthesis) in 2011 because the staff knew it would improve diagnostic accuracy; even so, the technology has exceeded all expectations. In 2012 more than 22,000 mammograms were performed at the Breast Center. Two-thirds of those studies, more than 14,000, were 3D exams.

“Since implementing this technology, 3D has helped us identify at least five malignancies which were not visible on the 2D images because they were very small and obscured by dense breast tissue. We caught these lesions well ahead of when they otherwise would have been identified, which changed the outcomes for the patients,” states Andrew Warheit, MD, Medical Director of the Breast Center and attending radiologist at St. Peter’s Hospital.

Initially, St. Peter’s replaced one of its 2D units with a Hologic Selenia® Dimensions® 3D mammography system. Within a few months, they added a second unit to keep up with demand, and plan on transitioning their two additional systems to 3D in the near future.

“We have a solid base of patients who benefit from the improved diagnostic capabilities of 3D mammography,” explains Dr. Warheit. Since opening its doors a decade ago, St. Peter’s Breast Center has become the most preferred facility in the Capital Region for dealing with complex cases. The center has been named a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence by the American College of Radiology, and was the first center in the Capital Region to receive the national designation.

With a team dedicated to delivering the most advanced care, implementing the 3D technology went smoothly. “Our skilled staff in the mammography department caught on to the new technology very quickly: we were up and running within days,” states Elizabeth Malloy, Breast Center Supervisor.

Improved Workflow, Better Diagnostics

St. Peter’s Breast Center has six dedicated breast imagers and offers a comprehensive suite of breast health services including mammography, ultrasound, breast MRI, and breast biopsies. The essence of the Breast Center is its combination of prompt care, expertise and the most modern, specialized breast-imaging technology.

“Our focus is to offer women a single location for all breast health services,” explains Malloy. “When a patient comes in for a diagnostic mammogram, we can perform an ultrasound and biopsy on the same day so they don’t have to keep coming back for additional testing. We can do this partly because 3D mammography is decreasing the number of callbacks and improving the efficiency of our workflow.”

The technology is making a significant improvement in the breast center’s diagnostic capabilities. This is particularly true for women with dense breast tissue although Dr. Warheit notes all patients can benefit from a 3D exam. “For a fatty breast, 3D can rule out abnormalities. If you find little nodules or little round densities, you can look through the slices on the 3D images and see clearly the fattyulum and you know it’s a lymph node right off the bat. In a dense breast, the underlying dense tissue matts away on a 3D image.”

Adds Malloy, “With 3D technology, radiologists can sort through the layers of breast tissue; it rules things out as well as lets you find cancers earlier. It’s an amazing technology that is critical in diagnosing cancers at the very earliest stage.

Fewer Callbacks Frees-up Resources for Diagnostic Exams

At first, the Breast Center predominately used 3D for diagnostic mammograms, only performing screening mammograms if the system had an open slot. But over time, more physicians and patients began requesting 3D. Additionally, 3D created new efficiencies at the Breast Center, including fewer callbacks and more time for diagnostic exams. Dr. Warheit reports 3D mammography has cut the Breast Center’s callback rate by 50 percent. “With 2D, many patients were being called back to evaluate asymmetries. We’re finding 99 percent of these asymmetries are easily clarified on the 3D images, identifying them as superimposed tissue or overlying densities rather than anything real.”

Fewer callbacks mean more scheduling slots for women who need diagnostic studies. “We try to get woman back as quickly as possible after we read their screening exams,” states Malloy. “3D is enabling us to accelerate those women into a 24- to 48-hour time period, so we’ve cut out some of the waiting period for people that need real diagnostic evaluations.”

Preventing Unnecessary Biopsies

“I think the real benefit is not getting all the way to biopsy for something that turns out to be benign,” adds technologist Darlene Pesnel. “Most biopsies do turn out to be benign; but, in the past, many patients had to get to tissue sampling for a definitive answer. With 2D, you would see little things that were vague, just innocent asymmetries, but no matter how you positioned, no matter what you did, you couldn’t make them go away. Now, 3D answers those questions right out of the gate.”

Plus, when we do find something that’s real and hidden in tissue we know exactly where it is, what depth it’s at, and what quadrant it’s in. “You know exactly how to look for it with ultrasound or with MRI. So, we get the very best tissue sampling of the proper area and a fast diagnosis.”

“I like what I do, which is taking care of patients. So anything that’s going to benefit patients excites me,” adds technologist Sarah Mesmer. “We’re thrilled to be able to offer this leading-edge technology to our patients. That’s really satisfying.”

More Physicians Are Specifying 3D Mammograms

The Breast Center sent a letter to all area physicians informing them of the availability of 3D and the benefits it offers patients. As a result, they began seeing referring physicians request 3D. “We are seeing providers write ‘3D Mammo’ on the script,” states Malloy. “That’s brand new. Now physicians understand what 3D can do for their patients; and, if they know someone has had a lot of difficulty, or is at high risk for breast cancer, or has been called back year after year, then 3D is the right technology.”

“We don’t charge for the 3D exam or bill for anything additional on top of a routine screening or diagnostic mammogram,” concludes Dr. Warheit. “Early detection is our mantra, and the improvement in diagnostics is well worth the time. 3D gets better outcomes and it saves lives.”
3D Mammography Technology Brings Patients to the Breast Center and to the Hospital as a Whole

The Women’s Breast Center at Stamford Hospital offers comprehensive breast care services to women of all ages, using high technology, a multidisciplinary and patient-centered approach to care, and community education and screening.

The facility has been recognized by the American College of Radiology and the American College of Surgeons. The Women’s Breast Center is one of two locations for the Hospital’s mammography services, the other being the Darten Imaging Center.

“We consider our investment in technology, an investment in the health of the women we serve,” states David Sack, Director of Radiology at Stamford Hospital. “When I saw 3D mammography technology, I knew it made sense for our patients.”

The Challenge of Bringing on a New Technology

When the first 3D mammography system was installed, the hospital found itself in a unique situation. The technology was only available at one of the hospital’s two imaging locations, but patients wanted the convenience at both. It quickly became clear woman preferred the 3D mammogram and, more women were coming and asking for it, which created scheduling issues. Sack continued. “All of a sudden there were fewer exams scheduled on the 2D units and we had an overload on the 3D unit. We quickly realized we had to make 3D mammography available at both centers.

So, in 2012, Stamford Hospital added two additional Hologic 3D mammography systems, and began offering the new technology to all screening patients. “The systems weren’t budgeted, but it was the right thing to do,” explains Sack. “Our administration was convinced we were on the right path. They’re very supportive of the Women’s Breast Center.”

Reduced Recalls and Increased Patient Volume

Since adding 3D mammography, the hospital has seen a 50 percent reduction in screening recalls and patient breast cancer screening volume has increased dramatically. The first year 3D mammography was available the hospital saw a 10 percent increase in patients – with just one unit. In the first two months of 2013, it has seen an increase of approximately 25 percent.

“There’s no question our patient volume has increased substantially by adding the 3D system,” says Sack. “Women hear about 3D mammography and they want it, they want to get the right answer and they don’t want to wait. It’s not hard to sell by any means.”

Stamford Hospital doesn’t charge an extra fee for the 3D exam because the hospital considers it to be the basic standard of care. “We don’t want women to have to choose between paying extra or not having the best exam. Our business model offsets any additional costs through an increase in patient volume. Instead of charging more we just get more patients and make up the difference that way,” states Sack.

Sack notes the increased revenue from 3D imaging impacts more than just the Women’s Breast Center. “The immovable impact of more women coming to the Breast Center is the downstream revenue. There are more people in the system. Plus, women make the healthcare decisions in the family. If they’re coming to Stamford Hospital because we have leading-edge technology, they’re probably going to want to bring the rest of their family here for other medical care as well.”

Concludes Sack, “3D mammography is just the right thing to do. My administration supports this view. If we are committed to being the best breast center then we need the latest and greatest technology.”

Changing the Way We Deliver Breast Care

To assure a successful implementation of the new imaging technology, the Niedland Breast Center introduced 3D imaging in stages. Firmly believing any innovation affects the entire organization, not just the staff directly involved with imaging, the Niedland Breast Center began by educating its entire team about the new modality. They trained the staff on which patients are candidates for the 3D exam, how to explain the procedure to patients, and what to expect from the images. “Everything about the technology is new to our breast center,” explains Couris.

The Niedland Breast Center next reached out to referring physicians, presenting case studies during medical and oncology rounds. “When physicians saw the results of 3D imaging, the conversation started to change,” explains Couris. “We are finding cancers earlier and finding cancers we would have missed with conventional digital technology. As a result, we’re starting to see referring physicians embrace 3D mammography.”

3D imaging also is helping the Niedland Breast Center reduce take positives and eliminate unnecessary biopsies. “3D technology enables us to be a great deal more accurate diagnostically, which eliminates the need for many biopsy procedures,” says Couris. “That changes the way we deliver care to a breast patient. We’re moving from a world where more is better, to a world that’s predicated on quality, on clinical outcomes, and on patient safety. That’s significant.”

Reimbursement Isn’t an Obstacle

Jupiter Medical Center does not charge patients an additional amount for the exam, even though the hospital currently is not receiving insurance reimbursement for the 3D portion of the procedure. “We chose not to charge our patients in large part because 3D is simply the right thing to do,” states Couris. “If we want to be the best in the region when it comes to breast care – and we are the best – then we need to provide the best technology.”

“3D imaging represents the most advanced screening and diagnostic technology available. We’re not talking about doing the same thing better. We’re talking about going from great to world-class. Tomosynthesis represents world-class care for our breast patients.”

The medical center does assign a generic CPT code to the procedure so they can track the volume. But, they do not bill the patient or insurance companies at this time. Couris is confident 3D mammography will be reimbursed eventually. “In our industry, reimbursement always lags behind the introduction of cutting-edge technology. We are confident reimbursement will come.”

A Long-Term Commitment

Jupiter Medical Center has made a long-term commitment to 3D mammography. “It takes times to implement, but we’re seeing the clinical and business benefits of having the most advanced diagnostic imaging technology,” states Couris. “We’re seeing positive changes in how we handle and deliver care to breast patients.”

“We’re fortunate to have leaders that understand if we are going to be world-class, if we are going to be innovative, we have to take the lead with new technologies. And, in the case of 3D mammography, that decision is paying off. Not just for Jupiter Medical Center, but for the community we serve,” concludes Couris.
One company is working to increase compliance by helping physician practices provide their patients with in-office mammograms. Since the late 1980’s, ONsite Mammography has been working to improve the early detection of breast cancer by making it easier for women to get annual mammograms. The company partners with OB/GYN and primary care practices to provide mammograms in the office as part of patients’ annual well visit exams. ONsite is currently working with physician practices in 25 locations throughout Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Virginia. Last year alone, ONsite performed over 150,000 mammograms for its physician practices. Last year alone, ONsite performed over 150,000 mammograms for its physician practices. The company partners with OB/GYN and primary care practices to provide mammograms in the office as part of patients’ annual well visit exams. ONsite is currently working with physician practices in 25 locations throughout Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Virginia. Last year alone, ONsite performed over 150,000 mammograms for its physician partners. In 2013 ONsite began making the transition to 3D mammography (breast tomosynthesis) as their standard technology for annual breast cancer screening.

Seamless For Physicians, Convenient for Patients
“We know early detection through annual mammograms is the key to changing the outcomes of breast cancer,” states Karl Schmidt, President and CEO of ONsite Mammography. “So, we make it as easy as possible for women to have a screening mammogram by making it part of the in-office healthcare services physicians offer their patients.”

ONsite provides a complete turnkey solution, including state-of-the-art mammography / tomosynthesis technology, experienced technologists and radiologists, as well as marketing and scheduling support. “We manage the entire mammography process, enabling our physician-partners to provide the best healthcare service without making a major investment in equipment and staff. Our goal is to add value for the patients and physicians,” states Schmidt. ONsite completely customizes its services to integrate seamlessly into each practice. “We standardize on equipment, servers, and various protocols; but, because essentially each practice is different, we evaluate individual workflows and adapt our services to maximize the benefits to the practice and its patients.”

A Comprehensive Well Women Visit
ONsite recently partnered with the Women’s Health Care Group of PA (WHCSPA), a practice with 95 OB/GYN physician members in Western Philadelphia, to create a Center for Breast Health in Paoli, PA. WHCSPA is dedicated to providing women with access to comprehensive, state-of-the-art and affordable health care. “We wanted to make the annual mammogram a more positive experience for patients,” explains Natasha Khadar, Elaine Cybulski, right: Mary Reuther, Ginny Agovino, Center for Breast Health, left to right: Mary Reuther, Ginny Agovino, Natasha Khadar, Elaine Dybowski.

Our mission is to detect breast cancer earlier and save lives by providing high-quality, patient-centric mammography services.” Karl Schmidt, President and CEO of ONsite Mammography

Dr. Stephen Knell, President and Founder of VMICPA. “Collectively, the physicians in our group order over 100,000 mammograms a year, so we were exploring a way to offer mammography in our facilities. Screened mammograms are critical for detecting breast cancer at the earliest possible stage; and, we wanted to make it an easier, more convenient and less stressful annual exam for our patients. I really like ONsite Mammography’s model and their experience in providing in-office mammography services.”

Mary Reuther, a Certified Mammographer with ONsite Mammography, manages the Center for Breast Health providing services for six of the Women’s Health Care Group practices. They perform as many as 40 mammograms a day. “We are an extension of the practice,” explains Reuther. “We have the patient’s history, and their prior records, so she is integrated into the mammography service right in the practice. Physicians know when they send patients to the Center they will receive the best service. We bring convenience, comfort, confidentiality, and consistency to practices and patients.” Patients at the Center for Breast Health receive their results within an hour of completing the exam. A nurse practitioner is on staff to meet with each patient to teach thorough self-breast exams. The Center also has the capability to screen for high-risk patients who are potential candidates for genetic testing for breast cancer. “We work very closely with our partner physicians; and, they feel very comfortable calling us whenever they have a question,” adds Reuther.

3D Technology Changes the Mammography Experience
The Center for Breast Health is the first ONsite Mammography site to offer 3D mammography, utilizing the Hologic Selenia Dimensions® breast tomosynthesis system. “Our radiologists re seeing things on 3D they cannot see on the 2D images in the same examination, so we are finding things earlier and smaller on 3D than we can on 2D,” states Schmidt. “We are in the process of transitioning three of our existing twenty-eight 2D systems to 3D and, going forward, we will implement 3D mammography at all new breast imaging sites.” ONsite has fellowship-trained breast imagers reading all images. “This is all we do. We use the best radiologists in the country,” states Schmidt. “Our radiologists have extensive experience and existing standards.”

Dr. Michael Sponzor, President of Total Radiology Solutions (TRS), reads over 20,000 mammograms a year for ONsite locations, including the 3D mammograms for the Center for Breast Health in Paoli. “We love the 3D images,” states Dr. Sponzor. “We’re finding cancers earlier and save lives by providing high-quality, patient-centric mammography services.”

“Our mission is to detect breast cancer earlier and save lives by providing high-quality, patient-centric mammography services.”

“The Center for Breast Health is the first ONsite Mammography site to offer 3D mammography, utilizing the Hologic Selenia Dimensions® breast tomosynthesis system.”

“Even with the best intentions, many women put off their annual mammogram. It’s one more appointment to schedule, one more trip to the imaging center or hospital; and, with so many demands on their time, many women don’t make the time.”

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Saving Lives by Reaching Out to the Uninsured

SouthCoast Imaging began donating imaging services to people in the community without access to healthcare in 2000. “Over the past 15 years, the number of uninsured people needing help has grown exponentially,” states Shapiro. Last year, SouthCoast donated over 500 3D mammograms, in order to raise funds to pay for the increasing volume of free mammograms, the practice, in partnership with the Community Health Mission in Savannah and Volunteers in Medicine in Hilton Head, began a campaign called “Share Life...In 3D.” The campaign raises awareness of the importance of screening mammograms and brings the community together to help all women gain access.

“With the “Share Life...In 3D” campaign, women can take care of themselves and at the same time pay it forward to help other women. We couldn’t be more thrilled.”

Patricia Shapiro, M.D., Director of Imaging at SouthCoast Imaging

Physicians and Patients See the Benefits of 3D

Currently, SouthCoast is the only imaging facility in the Savannah area with 3D technology, and this is bringing more women to the facility. “We have definitely picked up new referring sources, and new patients as a result of 3D,” explains Shapiro. “We have women travel an hour and a half just to have a 3D exam.”

“3D lowers the callback rate and enables us to identify lesions, which we flat out cannot see on the 2D exam,” explains Shapiro. “In fact, at a meeting of the tumor board, one of the breast surgeons in our community presented cases of breast cancer so small the lesions couldn’t be seen on the 2D system. He was quite pleased he was able to do that for his patients.”

Shapiro, who is also a board member of SouthCoast Medical and Chair of the Finance Committee, explains SouthCoast Imaging was interested in 3D long before commercial systems were available. “We added 3D because the concept made eminent sense. It is what we do on CT scans and MRIs. It was logical that it should be a better way to analyze breast tissue.”

When SouthCoast needed to replace an older mammography unit a few years ago, it purchased the Hologic Senias Dimensions 3D system. “We couldn’t perform 3D exams at that point because Hologic did not have FDA approval.” Once Hologic received FDA approval, SouthCoast waited another year before implementing the system’s 3D capabilities. “We paid extra to purchase the Dimensions with 3D capability, but we didn’t turn on the software until peer-reviewed publications supported 3D as a better way to do mammography.”

Today, SouthCoast uses 3D mammography for all diagnostic mammograms. For screening mammograms, the staff offers women the option of the 3D exam with an additional $50 co-pay; and, they’re seeing a steady increase in the number of women choosing the 3D exam. “Although health insurance covers the cost of a 2D exam, a callback diagnostic exam hits the patient’s deductible,” explains Shapiro. “When women learn 3D has a higher detection rate and lowers the incidence of callbacks, which ultimately lowers their cost, most women request the 3D screening exam.”

Using 3D for Biopsies

SouthCoast also has standardized on 3D-guided stereotactic biopsies in place of conventional stereotactic procedures. “We were one of the first sites in the county to do 3D-guided biopsies,” declares Shapiro. “It has made such a difference. It is an extremely precise method for performing a biopsy, and much faster than a standard stereotactic procedure. After the first few cases, the physicians decided to use 3D guidance instead of stereotactic guidance for all biopsies.”

Share Life...In 3D

“3D is making a difference for patients,” concludes Shapiro. “It is more complete, more precise, and we’re seeing masses in the breast tissue that we could not see on a 2D exam. We’re also seeing more patients because we have 3D technology. With the “Share Life...In 3D” campaign, women can take care of themselves and at the same time pay it forward to help other women. We couldn’t be more thrilled. We Share Life...In 3D.”

SouthCoast Imaging, in cooperation with the Community Health Mission in Savannah and Volunteers in Medicine in Hilton Head provide free 3D mammograms to women in the community in a program called “Sharing Life...In 3D.”

The private imaging practice has been donating 3D mammograms to uninsured women in its community for years, and recently introduced an innovative fundraising program to make 3D mammograms available to more women. SouthCoast donates one 3D mammogram to a woman without healthcare for every ten screening 3D mammograms they perform.

“We don’t have access to mammography unless we help,” explains Patricia Shapiro, MD, diagnostic radiologist and Director of Imaging. “Screening is critical to improving detection and outcomes, and we’re making sure all women have access. This is hugely important.”

SouthCoast has two imaging facilities in Savannah, Georgia and recently opened a facility in Hilton Head, South Carolina. The multi-modality imaging centers offer a comprehensive range of services including mammography, ultrasound, MRI, CT scan, bone density testing, fluoroscopy, image-guided pain management injection and nuclear medicine. It was one of the first imaging centers in Georgia to offer 3D mammography. “We understand the importance of an accurate diagnosis,” states Shapiro. “Our centers offer board certified physicians, skilled technologists, and state-of-the-art technology.”

The staff performs more than 12,000 mammograms annually, and has been providing 3D mammograms since August 2012. They have three Hologic Senias Dimensions mammotomography systems and plan to add a fourth system in 2014.
“3D has been phenomenal for us. In the short time since we acquired 3D mammography, we have seen almost 350 new patients walk through our doors and we anticipate even more this year.”

Jennifer Sanders, Mammography Manager, Methodist Hospitals

“Our patient population is very savvy and stays current on new technologies. If we don’t offer the latest technologies, patients will find a practice that does.”

Lily Chu Sicard, M.D., Fairfax Radiological Consultants

“We are finding cancers earlier and finding cancers we would have missed with conventional digital imaging. As a result, we’re starting to see referring physicians embrace 3D mammography.”

John D. Couris, President/CEO, Jupiter Medical Center

Preserving Lives. At Hologic, we deliver trailblazing technologies to keep you on the forefront of breast care. Our passion drives us in the relentless pursuit of innovative tools that set new paradigms for the early detection, accurate diagnosis, intervention and treatment of breast cancer – technologies to help you protect and preserve the lives of your patients. With you, we are on a mission to help women live longer, healthier lives.

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