

Clinical Update

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John Muir Health

Physician News

SERVICE LINE SPOTLIGHT:

Comprehensive Breast Center With 3-D Imaging Opens at 133 La Casa Via – *Medical Imaging No Longer Offered at 1656 N. California Boulevard*

Over the weekend of March 12 - 14, The Medical Imaging staff moved its Walnut Creek mammography services from 1656 North California Boulevard into the new Breast Center located at 133 La Casa Via, on the Garden Level of the parking structure at John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek.

“Now, all the comprehensive breast services we offer are centrally located in one place. The new imaging center is just across the hall from the Breast Health Center, where we have our breast health nurse navigators, genetic counseling, the breast center library and internet services. All this will be very helpful for patients,” said Linda Womack, Executive Director of Medical Imaging.

Efforts by Linda Womack and by Brenda Carlson, Executive Director, Oncology Services, coupled with funding support from the John Muir Health Foundation’s Gala in November 2015, allowed Imaging Services to acquire three new 3-D digital breast tomosynthesis (DBT) machines, offering an advanced tool that can provide multiple images of the entire breast to a wider range of patients.

The digital tomosynthesis machines will be available at the new center in Walnut Creek as well as at Brentwood and soon in Concord.

JMHPN visited the new center at 133 La Casa Via and spoke with Linda Womack and Karen Connolly, Manager of Clinical Imaging, as well as Vivian Wing, MD, chair of the Department of Radiology, and Brenda Carlson, executive director of Oncology Services, to learn more.

***JMHPN:* Tell us about these new developments – what are the advantages of this move? How will the new 3-D mammography technology be an improvement?**

Brenda Carlson: It has always been our vision, in an effort to enhance care coordination, to have all parts of our department physically closer together -- so this is a wonderful accomplishment. In terms of technology, we are so proud and excited to be moving our Breast Imaging Services forward – to the leading edge of screening mammography for more of our patients. The addition of more 3-D mammography units can help us detect cancers at an earlier stage. For our patients, this can translate to simpler treatment, a better outcome, and less intrusion into their lives. We are very excited that all our patients will now be able to access this technology.

Vivian Wing, MD: Although mammography remains the only imaging modality proven to be effective in decreasing mortality from breast cancer, we also know that it is only about 70% sensitive for all breast types and even more limited in women with dense breasts. This is due to obscuration of detail by the dense tissue. Tomosynthesis is a technical advance in how the mammogram is performed to improve upon this limitation. Basically, 15 images are acquired and then reconstructed into 1 mm slices. This helps the radiologist detect small cancers which might otherwise be hidden by surrounding dense tissue.

Another criticism of mammography has been the high callback rate (approximately 10% of women get called back for additional views, usually related to superimposition of normal glandular tissue), resulting in patient anxiety and increased costs. Studies have shown that incorporating tomosynthesis into practices has resulted in a decrease in the callback rate while increasing the cancer detection rate. Here, we have definitely seen a drop in the callback rate since installing our first tomo unit last summer. The relative downside is that the tomo studies take 2 – 3 times longer to read, but I think the benefits far outweigh the longer reading time.

Linda Womack: Advantages of the new, consolidated department include more convenience for patients, in terms of ‘one-stop shopping,’ greater ease of parking (we are right on the ground level of the parking structure), and less walking. It was one of our goals to make getting a mammogram a nicer, more comfortable experience.

Of what are you most proud?

Linda Womack: I’m most proud of how we’ve partnered with all the people involved with the services we offer to make the comprehensive breast center exist. Different parts of the services have been in multiple locations, and this brings us under one roof. I am also very proud of my team, and very thankful for those who have given toward our cause and allowed us to fund our new equipment in Walnut Creek.

What will this mean for physicians and employees?

Linda Womack: The staff is very excited, being all together, centrally, near the hospital campus.

As of this month, imaging services have moved from the Wellness Center at 1656 North California Boulevard in Walnut Creek to the new Breast Imaging Center at 133 La Casa Via, in the Garden Level of the parking structure at John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek. Patients are now being scheduled at the new center. Automated reminder calls that include the new address will go to each patient scheduled.

Screening and diagnostic mammography is also offered in San Ramon, Concord, and Brentwood. 3-D mammography is available in Brentwood and will soon be in Concord.

Having all services for our patients in one location increases our physician and employee satisfaction. It feels better because we have the whole care model in place, the whole continuum of care.

Karen Connolly: Moving into the space across from the Breast Health Center allows us to combine our efforts, with more interaction and collaboration. In the past, when a patient was in for a diagnostic screening, and then perhaps required biopsy, all the next steps were a phone call away. Now, we can access this right down the hall. And across the hall, they have the breast health nurse navigator, Vicki Rocconi, for help and support with next steps. If any followup is needed, the patient already knows where to go.

What do you wish other MDs knew about the new department?

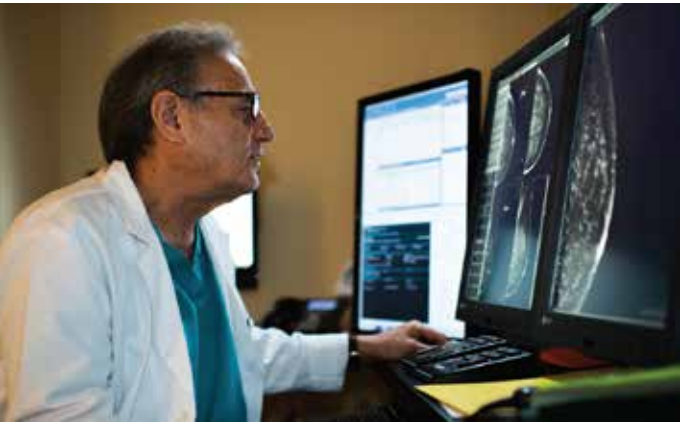
Karen Connolly: Physicians may want to know that two recent studies from the *American Journal of Roentgenology* (AJR) and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) focused on the impact of 3-D mammography and demonstrated the following key findings:

- 29% increase in all breast cancers detected
- AJR found a 44% increase in invasive cancer detected with 3-D mammography; JAMA found a 41% increase in the detection of invasive cancers using 3-D mammography or DBT
- AJR and JAMA found a 15 to 16% decrease in the recall rate

In addition, we’re excited that John Muir Health has acquired new equipment for biopsies, using dual stereotactic 3-D biopsy imaging, which will enable radiologists to easily locate regions of interest and target them. The system allows the patient to be upright rather than prone, which will be much more comfortable, and the process promises to be faster and more efficient.

Radiologists will be trained on the new system in April.

Vivian Wing, MD: We are looking forward to installation of the Affirm biopsy device, which will allow us to perform core biopsies on lesions visualized only on tomosynthesis. This new tool will greatly benefit patients who might otherwise have had to undergo a surgical biopsy.



Jonathan Fish, MD, diagnostic radiologist, reviews 3-D mammogram images at the new breast imaging center. “It’s like reading a regular mammogram, but in slices,” he says. “Research shows that 3-D mammography results in fewer callbacks for false positives, and that it can help you find additional cancers regular mammography can’t find.”

What will be most challenging in future?

Karen Connolly: Our biggest challenge so far has been closing on a Friday and opening in a new location on Monday! Many people here worked through the weekend. But we had very few issues on Monday, thanks to the team effort and very detailed planning.

Do you have any patient stories you’d like to share?

Karen Connolly: Recently, a patient came to San Ramon Regional Medical Center for her screening mammogram. She mentioned to her technologist that she had dense breast tissue and a strong family history of breast cancer. The tech

also worked in Walnut Creek, and advised the patient that she might benefit from our new 3-D imaging. The patient rescheduled, and had the 3-D mammogram. As it turns out, breast cancer was detected. Following her biopsy and surgery, she returned to San Ramon Regional to give a personal thank-you to the tech.

This tells the story of a great catch due to diligent staff --and to leading-edge technology.



The new 3-D tomosynthesis mammography suites at 133 La Casa Via feature a bright, comfortable environment and efficient throughput. “Patients say, ‘it’s so quick, in and out,’” says Karen Connolly, manager of Clinical Imaging. “Using new robes, rather than patient gowns, makes the experience that much nicer.”