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New technology redefines screening, accuracy in mammograms

BY SUSAN HOUTS

Take a look at today's breast cancer screening and treatment rooms in Brevard County and you will soon see that what is happening isn't your grandmother's mammogram.

Changes in technology in both detection and treatment have allowed for earlier detection of breast cancer through healthier and more comfortable exams, as well as more targeted treatment and recovery resulting in less disruptive procedures and shorter healing times.

According to Meghan Schultz, the lead radiologist at Tepas Breast Center, the newer 3D mammography exam uses lower doses of radiation, causing less impact on the cells of the patient.

"The 3D X-ray mapping technology also allows for a more accurate reading of results, reducing the emotional turmoil and used time of return visits to the office for a mistaken or inconclusive diagnosis," Schultz said.

A 3D Mammogram also can be more effective in detecting breast cancer in earlier stages as well as in the more dense breast tissue often found in younger patients, meaning cancer is being found and addressed earlier.

Another adjustment made to this process in recent years is comfort: rather than the flat plates of old, the newer SmartCurve technology has developed curved contouring mammography paddles that better fit a woman's anatomy, eliminating the need for painful compression of the breast.

"I tell all of my patients that the best thing they can do is to go tell someone



SENIOR LIFE Susan Houts

Meghan Schultz, a radiology technician, shares the benefits of 3-D and SmartCurve mammography technology with a patient at the Tepas Breast Center. The center is located at 1140 Broadband Drive in Melbourne.

else that they had a mammogram and it didn't hurt," Schultz said. "Because if we can get them in the door, that is the first step to detection, and detection is the first step for intervention, which can truly mean saving a life."

Dr. Mustafa Amani of Health First Viera Hospital also said that early

detection is key.

"Research has shown that approximately 1 in 8 women and 1 in 833 men will experience breast cancer in their lifetime," he said.

This results in a 13% lifetime accumulated risk of contracting breast cancer for women.

"The flip side," Amani said, "is that 7 in 8 do not."

With the continued developments in technology in detection, treatment and recovery, the hope is that this number continues to decrease, saving and improving the lives of cancer patients in the years ahead. *SH*