Breast-Imaging — Seeing Inside The Clouds

New Equipment Bridges the Gap

By: Deborah Liv Johnson

Dr. Cutrone and the SenoBright ® Contrast-Enhanced Spectral Mammography, the most advanced, state-of-the-art dense breast imaging diagnostic tool available.

In the world of breast imaging, dense breasts present the most difficult problems in detecting cancer. Standard mammography equipment often cannot detect cancer lesions in women with dense breast tissue. According to Eisenhower Radiologist John Cutrone, MD, Board Certified in Radiology/Diagnostic Radiology, “It’s like looking for a small cloud behind a big cloud. Some small cancers, which are typically white on a mammogram, are easily obscured by breast tissue, which is also white.”

Thanks to a generous donation from BIGHORN Behind a Miracle (BAM), Eisenhower Schnitzer/Novack Breast Center was able to purchase the most advanced, state-of-the-art dense breast imaging diagnostic tool available, and is only the second facility in California to offer this exciting new technology. The SenoBright® Contrast-Enhanced Spectral Mammography (CESM) from GE Healthcare is a powerful diagnostic modality — able to detect minute cancers, as well as reduce the waiting time between detection and diagnosis.

“This technique is approved for use in women who traditionally have troublesome mammograms,” says Dr. Cutrone. “In other words, we can use this for women with dense breasts or women where we find an abnormality that is indeterminate. By giving them a dye and reviewing a contrast-enhanced mammogram, we’ll be able to get more, and better, information and determine whether or not a biopsy is required.”

According to Dr. Cutrone, it is easy to see abnormalities using traditional mammography on women with fatty breasts. As a woman’s breast tissue becomes denser, finding cancer becomes more challenging.“

CESM is a tremendous leap forward for us in breast imaging,” notes Dr. Cutrone. “One of the most difficult aspects of diagnostic medicine is finding a small cancer in a woman with dense breasts. The size of the cancer at the time it is detected is one of the most important determinants of how well a woman will do with treatment for breast cancer — our ability to find essentially small cancers that we might not otherwise have found is a very exciting prospect for us.”

Dr. Cutrone continues, “The ability to see how breast tissue reacts when a medication that seeks out areas of high blood flow is given, bridges the gap between traditional mammography — which is purely anatomic (shows what something looks like) — and MRI, which is a functional test (shows how much blood flow the abnormality has). We know that cancerous areas take up dye due to high blood flow differently than normal or benign conditions.”

“BAM’s involvement has been extraordinary,” says Belinda Zaparinuk, RT (M), BS, CBEC, Manager, Eisenhower Schnitzer/ Novack Breast Centers. “Each year, we see more than 23,000 patients, and BAM’s generosity has touched the lives of each one. They have greatly enhanced the quality of care available in this community and we feel so blessed.”

Eisenhower Schnitzer/Novack Breast Centers are located across the valley in La Quinta, Rancho Mirage and Palm Springs. During the past two years, each location has received brand new mammography equipment as well as state-of-the-art breast ultrasound equipment. CESM is available at the Rancho Mirage location in the Eisenhower Lucy Curci Cancer Center.

Breast Center staff includes Diagnostic Radiologists Deborah Rubin, MD and John Cutrone, MD, technologists, nurses, a film librarian and clerical support.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 760-773-2038.

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