

Combining MammoPad and Digital Mammography: A World of Difference in a Competitive Marketplace

Southeastern Connecticut Imaging in Waterford has plenty of benefits to offer its mammography patients: a brand new facility, state-of-the-art digital mammography equipment, and the convenience of same-day results. But there's one feature Executive Director Joanne Taylor says will definitely keep women coming back: the Hologic MammoPad® radiolucent breast cushion.

"Women are surprised at how much more comfortable it is with MammoPad," she said. "I think they would come back here for that reason alone."

Differentiating Service While Comforting Patients

In 2007, Southeastern Connecticut Imaging installed a Hologic Selenia digital mammography system. But what really set the site apart was their decision to offer the MammoPad breast cushions and digital mammography.

What started out as a way to differentiate themselves quickly evolved into a valued service to its patients. "It was primarily patient satisfaction," said Radiologist Brenda Koblick, M.D. when asked why they chose to continue offering MammoPad after an initial trial. "The feedback we got from patients was that it's much more comfortable. They said it made a world of difference, and you really can't argue with that."

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Women respond positively to the cushion because of the enhanced comfort and the psychological benefit, according to Dr. Koblick, and this, in turn, encourages more women to get their annual screening mammogram. And more women choosing Southeastern Connecticut Imaging for digital mammography and the MammoPad, increased the volume of the site.

It's not hard to see why the center actively markets its status as the area's first and so far, only Softer Mammogram Provider™. From newspaper and radio ads to features in local publications to appearances at local conferences and health fairs, the site makes a regular effort to spread the word about the benefits of the MammoPad cushion.

The strongest form of communication is word of mouth, Taylor noted. "People tend to take direction from their friends and family. Women who are apprehensive of hospital environments or pain actually enjoy the experience of coming here," said Taylor. "If a woman tells a friend it's more comfortable, their friend is more likely to come to us than if she read about it in the newspaper or heard it on the radio."

The importance of word-of-mouth is why Southeastern Connecticut Imaging continually strives to improve the patient experience. Aside from the MammoPad cushion, the center offers the convenience and peace of mind of same-day mammography results. Screening and diagnostic mammograms are read on-site at the time of the exam,

preventing the need for call backs. If necessary, women receive follow-up imaging before they leave, whether it's additional mammography views or breast ultrasound.

While the center does not perform biopsies, women have the benefit of knowing whether they require additional testing prior to leaving the center the day of their exam. "Same-day results ease a patient's anxiety tremendously. It's an awful thing to have to go home and wait for your results. For many women, getting immediate results is the most important thing, so they're very happy at our center," said Dr. Koblick.

The Latest Imaging Technology

The availability of digital mammography has also proven to be a powerful way to attract patients, particularly ones who would have gone to another facility for a digital exam. According to Taylor, a physician in a neighboring town who was referring women to a digital facility in Rhode Island now sends his patients to Southeastern Connecticut Imaging for the new technology.

When the center opened, digital was the only technology the site considered for mammography. The decision was based on their desire to only offer the latest imaging technology, as well as a more practical reason: the rest of the center's equipment was digital and they didn't want a modality that required film.

In fact, the lack of film is one of digital's primary benefits, says Dr. Koblick. Unlike analog images, which require storage and labor-intensive management, the electronic handling of information makes the mammography process more convenient and user-friendly. Digital technology is simply better suited for a specialty like mammography, enabling Dr. Koblick and the center's other radiologists to provide better care.

"As a radiologist, it seems to me that we're visualizing more things with digital. It's just a better technology for doing mammography. The image manipulation tools are at our fingertips," Dr. Koblick said. "It will always be challenging to read mammograms, but digital is a tremendous improvement."

Though it was an easy transition to digital mammography for Southeastern Connecticut Imaging, they say that after more than a year in operation, it just keeps getting easier. In fact, now that patients whose previous exams were done on the digital equipment are returning, the comparison of images is virtually seamless. "It's convenient and we're comfortable with the technology. It's the best possible technology," said Taylor.

