

Encouraging Early Detection Through State-of-the-Art Technology

Wellington Regional Medical Center

Located in Wellington, Florida, Wellington Regional Medical Center has always had a successful breast imaging program, according to Director of Imaging, Paul Sohlden. The Comprehensive Women's Imaging Center offers a "complete package" of breast health services, including: screening and diagnostic mammography, breast ultrasound and breast MRI, as well as stereotactic, ultrasound and MRI-guided breast biopsy.

In 2008, the Women's Imaging Center added two Hologic Selenia® digital mammography systems and the Hologic MammoPad® breast cushion to its state-of-the-art diagnostics. As a result, Wellington's breast imaging program experienced clinical benefits, volume growth and – most importantly – increased patient satisfaction.

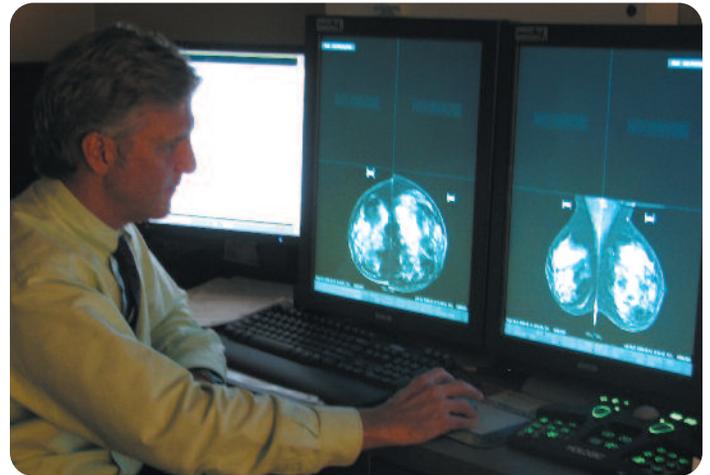
"Our whole reason behind implementing digital mammography and MammoPad was to provide the technology that would encourage more women to get their annual mammograms," said Sohlden. "If we can improve compliance, it's going to be a positive benefit for patients as well as for us."

Keeping Up with the Latest Technology

In 2007, Wellington noticed a decline in mammography volume, particularly as more facilities in Palm Beach County swapped their analog systems for digital mammography. Women and their physicians preferred the cutting-edge technology of digital mammography. In fact, many local physicians only referred their patients to facilities that utilized the digital system.

Wellington Regional devoted great time and effort in researching digital systems before purchasing, what we consider to be, the best system on the market. The professionals at the Women's Center were confident that the advanced technology of the Hologic Selenia digital mammography system would offer the highest quality in diagnostics to its patients, particularly younger women and women with dense breasts.

"It's all about early detection. The earlier you catch the cancer, the earlier the patient can be treated and the more likely there will be a successful outcome," said Sohlden. "Providing our patients with the latest technology is the best thing we can do for them."



Utilizing a dedicated mammography workstation like the SecurView™ further streamlines the radiologists' workflow, as it is geared specifically to meet the needs of radiologists who read mammograms.

By May 2008, the Women's Imaging Center converted to digital mammography. Since the installation of the Center's two Hologic Selenia systems, they have realized multiple benefits.

"The detail obtained with our digital mammography is excellent. The improved image quality that digital mammography provides over analog is very significant," Sohlden said. "Ultimately, the main benefit is better patient care."

Adds mammography technologist Eileen Norbeck, "Digital mammography is phenomenal. It's probably one of the most state-of-the-art tools offered in women's healthcare today. The image quality is much sharper and you can visualize the entire breast in one simple exposure."

Digital mammography has helped the Comprehensive Women's Imaging Center at Wellington provide a better experience to patients with an increased capacity to serve even more women. Without the need to develop film, the staff soon noticed a significant reduction in the workflow process. The improvement in workflow reduced exam times thus increasing the Center's capacity to accommodate more women. The staff is currently in the process of moving appointments from every 20 minutes to every 15 minutes, with the ultimate goal of every 10 minutes.

By removing the extra steps of film processing, digital also eliminates much of the time technologists spent away from patients. So while the digital exams were getting shorter, the improved technology enabled them to spend even more time in the exam room than before.



Since offering the MammoPad breast cushion as standard-of-care, the staff continues to see greater tissue acquisition on images taken with MammoPad compared to prior year exams.

While appointment times decreased with digital mammography, the Center's breast imaging volume experienced a substantial increase. Volume "skyrocketed" with digital, Sohlden said. In 2008, the center experienced a 10 percent increase in breast imaging procedures over 2007.

Several factors influenced Wellington Regional Medical Center to choose the Hologic Selenia systems for its digital mammography needs. The radiologists preferred the Selenia because of its detector design, post-processing algorithms, as well as the superior image quality. The technologists found the equipment to be sophisticated, yet user-friendly.

"You get the best of both worlds – it's easy to use and the technology is superior," Norbeck said. "Some of our radiologists read at other facilities with different equipment and they always recommend the Hologic Selenia over other systems."

Wellington Regional utilizes additional Hologic technology in its breast imaging suite, including R2 CAD and the SecurView™ workstation. Integrating the various pieces of equipment optimizes the Center's workflow, Sohlden said. The integration between digital mammography and CAD is "seamless." Utilizing a dedicated mammography workstation like the SecurView further streamlines the radiologists' workflow, as it is geared specifically to meet the needs of radiologists who read mammograms.

Adding Comfort to State-of-the-Art Imaging

Though patients appreciated the state-of-the-art mammography equipment, many still found the procedure to be uncomfortable. This prompted the hospital to search for a way to reduce complaints of discomfort during mammography.

"Our goal is to encourage women to have their screening mammograms on a regular basis, so we'll do what we can to make it a more comfortable experience," said Sohlden.

Studies show that the MammoPad breast cushion can reduce discomfort for most women by nearly 50 percent – but Wellington wanted to see for itself. Following a short trial with the cushion,

overwhelming positive responses from patients, convinced the hospital it was a worthy investment. In September 2008, The Comprehensive Women's Imaging Center at Wellington became the first and only facility in the area to offer women "the softer mammogram."

"The main benefit of MammoPad is that it changes the patient's perception of the exam," said Norbeck. "We're making an attempt to make this experience as pleasant as possible for them. Some women say 'Wow, this is so different. Now I won't wait four years to come back.'"

In order to spread the word about the benefits of a softer mammogram, Wellington relies on word-of-mouth and regularly encourages enthusiastic patients to "tell a friend or two." As a result, the Women's Imaging Center sees many women who chose Wellington for their screening mammogram based on a friend's recommendation.

In addition to patient satisfaction, breast radiologists at the Comprehensive Women's Imaging Center noted an additional benefit: increased tissue acquisition. During the trial, the staff compared new films to the previous year's exams and noticed a consistent increase in the amount of breast tissue visualized. Since offering MammoPad as standard-of-care, they continue to see greater tissue acquisition on images taken with MammoPad compared to prior year exams.

"Especially with smaller breasted patients, MammoPad helps hold the tissue in place during compression. Without even trying, you can get more muscle and tissue in the image," Norbeck said.

Improving the Overall Patient Experience

Though Wellington Regional focuses on bringing the latest technology to its patients, that commitment is only part of what improves the patient experience. In addition to boasting the best radiologists in the county, the hospital provides strong administrative support to take many burdens – like obtaining insurance authorizations – out of the hands of referring physicians and patients. Quick turnaround for test results and easy scheduling also adds to the experience.

"Having digital mammography and MammoPad is definitely a benefit to our patients. By combining advanced technologies with qualified, experienced staff, a beautiful facility and an excellent group of radiologists, we've managed to offer women a better overall experience," said Sohlden.

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