

# MammoPad and Selenia Help Major Breast Center Increase Patient Population by Fifty Percent

Houston Northwest Medical Center, Texas

After 35 years of operation, Houston Northwest Medical Center is recognized as a leader in breast health throughout north Houston. The Center's comprehensive breast care program focuses on early detection, advanced imaging techniques and ongoing support if cancer is found. Its frequent outreach programs raise both money and awareness for the disease throughout the community. In particular, the Breast Center's early adoption of two important innovations – digital mammography and the Hologic MammoPad® breast cushion – reinforced its status as a technological leader and demonstrated its commitment to staying ahead of the curve when it comes to offering state-of-the-art services.

## A High-Tech, Soft-Touch Pioneer

When the Houston Northwest Medical Center installed its first digital mammography unit in 2002, it was the first breast center in Houston to offer the new technology. The Center was truly a pioneer - adopting the technology years before the release of the ground breaking Digital Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial (DMIST) in 2005.

"The word was starting to get out there that digital was better. We knew it was the latest technology, and we wanted to be ahead of the curve," says Tosha Morton, manager of the Breast Center.

For several years, the center operated with one digital machine and two analog units. In 2006, the Center decided it was time to transition to an all-digital environment and replaced their remaining analog units with two Hologic Selenia digital mammography systems. According to Morton, the Center immediately began to notice positive results.

Their daily capacity increased by more than 50 percent, going from 60 appointments per day with one digital and two analog units, to more than 90 appointments per day with three digital units. The Center's cancer detection rate also increased, by a total of five percent in the year after completing the digital transition, which Morton attributes to both the center's skilled radiologists and digital mammography.

The Center also discovered the impact digital could have on its recall rate.

"Digital mammography is superior to analog for the detection



*Houston Northwest was truly a pioneer by adopting digital mammography years before the release of the ground breaking DMIST trial in 2005.*

of early breast cancer, especially in dense breasts," says radiologist Larry A. Grissom, MD. "We expected through our early experience that digital would improve the recall rate in patients with dense breasts, and this was substantiated by the recent large multi-center study reported by Dr. Pisano in the New England Journal of Medicine."

When it came time to transition to an all-digital environment, the Houston Northwest Medical Center had many choices. Ultimately, they chose the Selenia system because it is economical and user-friendly, which the hospital believed would make for an easier transition as the technologists moved from analog to digital.

According to Morton, it was a combination of the center's previous experience with digital mammography and the support from Hologic that made for a relatively smooth transition.

"We were already partially digital, which really helped with training," Morton says. "We've been very happy with Hologic. Everything works so well."

For the Breast Center, offering high-tech imaging was not enough; the Breast Center also wanted to offer the "soft-touch" of the Hologic MammoPad breast cushion. MammoPad is a radiolucent foam cushion designed to cover the cold, hard surfaces of the mammography equipment. Clinical studies have shown it can reduce mammography-related discomfort by 50 percent for three out of four women.

Like they did in adopting digital mammography, the Center was one of the first in the Houston metropolitan region to offer the MammoPad breast cushion to its patients. As soon as she heard about the cushion, Morton took the idea to the hospital administration because she thought it would be "very helpful and important."

“The major complaint I hear from patients is ‘This hurts.’ To me, it’s because it’s cold and hard, and MammoPad really helps with that,” says Morton. “Then on top of that, you get the clinical benefits as well. It’s a little bit of everything.”

Studies have shown that in addition to reducing discomfort, the MammoPad cushion can also increase tissue acquisition and compression when combined with positioning training.



*Like they did in adopting digital mammography, Houston Northwest was one of the first in the region to offer the MammoPad breast cushion to its patients to reduce mammography associated pain.*

### Leading Technology, Leading Patient Services

The Center also prides itself on innovations in the services they offer. Mammography appointments are available during the week from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., and they are one of the few centers in the community that open their doors on Saturday.

“A lot [of women] are working and can’t get away. So they can come in before work, after work, or a Saturday,” Morton says. “It’s all about convenience for the patients.”

Morton says another unique aspect of their center is that they offer the entire continuum of breast health services – from screening and diagnostic to biopsies and post-surgical care – under one roof. In addition, they offer a monthly support

group, as well as an educational services two times a year for patients and their families. It is this complete range of care that makes the Houston Northwest Medical Center “a truly comprehensive breast center,” Morton says.

### Community Outreach

In addition to providing state-of-the-art services, the Center is committed to spreading the word about the importance of mammography and encouraging more women to have this potentially lifesaving exam.

In May 2008, the center partnered with Dillard’s department store in an awareness promotion. During the month, any woman who had their screening mammogram at the Center received a Dillard’s coupon. Likewise, Dillard’s distributed literature from the center, encouraging women to get their screening so they could take part in the promotion as well. Overall, the promotion was a success, and they repeated it in October 2008.

At the same time, Houston Northwest partnered with Houston’s Northside Lexus and the Y-Me Breast Cancer Organization to raise awareness at local events, and sponsored a Mother’s Day walk for Y-Me. When a cancer survivor from the hospital wrote a book titled “No One Chose this Journey,” the Center sold t-shirts with the book’s title to raise even more money for the Y-Me Organization.

The various events raised approximately \$6,000, but for the Center, raising awareness of the importance of regular breast cancer screenings was equally important.

“We’ve been trying to do a lot of community service programs to tell the community, ‘Yes, you do still need mammograms,’” Morton says. “We just want to remind women that early detection saves lives.”

And together with digital mammography equipment and the MammoPad from Hologic, they can do just that.



*The staff at Houston Northwest is dedicated to getting the word out about early detection by offering early morning and evening appointments as well as staying open on Saturdays.*