

High Tech Mammography with a Soft Touch



The Lourdes "Mission in Motion" coach allows the hospital to give underserved and working women the same level of service as hospital patients

Lourdes Hospital: Leading the Way in Women's Imaging Services in Upstate New York

Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton, New York is a pioneer in women's health. It was the first facility in upstate New York to introduce both digital mammography and the MammoPad radiolucent breast cushion. Most recently, Lourdes led the way for the use of digital mammography in a mobile program with the installation of a Hologic Selenia system in its "Mission in Motion" van. Lourdes Hospital takes pride in its unique mobile program and the fact that their challenges will make it easier for other centers looking to offer digital mobile mammography in the future.

The Mission in Motion Coach – Providing Access to Quality Care to All Women in Upstate New York

For 11 years, Lourdes has provided mobile health services to the community. In 2007, they replaced their analog coach with their "Mission in Motion" coach to provide access to quality, state-of-the-art care to the women in the upstate New York region. This includes underserved women, who may not have insurance or the resources to pay for a mammogram, or simply don't have easy access to health services. Lourdes partners with the Cancer Services Program through the New York State Health Department to provide grants that cover the cost of the exam to women who qualify. The van also helps working women, whose busy schedules might prevent them from keeping up with regular screenings.

"There is a great service of convenience to women who work at a major employer in a corporate park," according to Mission in Motion project manager Kathy Cramer. "The van comes right to the worksite, and the employer can get involved to help promote good healthcare for the employees. The women really enjoy it." Mission in Motion serves an average of 185 women per month, or approximately 2,500 women each year. Lourdes employs a full-time outreach worker to go into the

community and identify populations that can benefit from the van's services – whether it's a retail employer with part-time workers without benefits, or women who work two jobs and have neither the time nor the resources to access healthcare.

As part of providing equal access to mammography, Mission in Motion strives to offer the same level of service as the hospital. Outreach coordinator Christine Berwald often hears from women who fear that using the van will prevent them from receiving the same quality of care.

"Women are concerned that by using the mobile unit, they'll be getting a lower standard-of-care," Berwald says. "Once they find out that the van also offers the same technology as the hospital, they get very excited."

So when Lourdes Breast Center installed digital mammography in June 2006, Mission in Motion purchased a new van and started the process of adopting the new technology as well. Unfortunately, a series of problems – like enabling the van's generator to power the mammography equipment – delayed the transition by several months. When Lourdes searched for other centers facing similar challenges, they realized how few digital mobile units existed.

"We tried very hard to find other people in our area who were going through the same issues, but no one could lead us to anyone who could be an example," Cramer says.

Now that their digital mobile mammography operates successfully, Lourdes takes pride in knowing that their efforts can serve as a guide for other breast centers.

"In moving our mobile program from analog to digital, we found that we are a pioneer of sorts. We're very proud of that fact," Cramer says. "Although it was difficult, we hope that our experience will make it easier for people who are researching digital mobile mammography in the future."

High-Tech with a Soft-Touch for Everyone

In addition to its digital mobile program, Lourdes introduced two other mammography innovations in upstate New York. As the first to offer both digital mammography and the MammoPad breast cushion, Lourdes helped set the standard for breast care in the region.

The installation of digital mammography in both the main breast center and the mobile van reflects Lourdes' desire to offer the latest technology, according to Breast Center manager Laurie Ziegler. In June 2006, the Breast Center replaced four analog machines with three Hologic Selenia systems. The transition went smoothly, and the technologists appreciated how digital streamlined their workload.

"We almost didn't know what to do with ourselves because we were so used to running out of the room to develop and check our films," Ziegler says. "It was so neat to have the image come up within seconds."

The improved workflow quickly became evident. With analog, Lourdes' scheduled patients every 20 minutes. With digital, they reduced appointment slots to 15 minutes, with an average of just seven minutes required to perform a digital exam. The increased capacity also led to a patient volume increase, and Lourdes now performs approximately 85 mammograms a day.

"Women notice the improved flow, that it's quicker for them to get results. It's just an all-around better process in our department," Ziegler says.

In addition, the accuracy of digital mammography helped the Breast Center lower its recall rate by more than 2 percent and reduced the number of unnecessary biopsies. According to Ziegler, digital requires them to do less repeat imaging and fewer biopsies, though they are finding just as many cancers.

"Really, that's the name of the game," she says. "We're saving our patients from additional radiation and unnecessary biopsies."

In 2005, Lourdes introduced the MammoPad breast cushion as the standard-of-care in both the breast center and the mobile unit.

"We were really excited about MammoPad, because we had heard about it being in development for a couple years," Ziegler says. "We were so happy when we could finally offer it."

Patients and technologists both shared the excitement for MammoPad. In addition to the increased comfort, women love the cushion for making the exam warmer – a particular

advantage for a breast center in the Northeast, Ziegler says. Technologists love MammoPad because it takes some of the heat off of them.

"We're usually 'the bad guys.' So we'll do anything we can do to make the exam more comfortable for the patient, because it takes the brunt off us," Ziegler says.

Lourdes felt Hologic's Customer Service and Tech Support Was Superior to Other Companies

When shopping for digital equipment, Lourdes looked at all four vendors offering digital mammography in the United States. They chose Hologic for both clinical and service reasons. The radiologists preferred the images on the Hologic SecurView DX workstation, as well as the larger imaging detector of the Selenia

system. As current Hologic customers, they were also impressed with the customer service.

"One of our analog units was Lorad, and I knew that Hologic's customer service and tech support was far superior to any other company," Ziegler says. Indeed, it was Hologic's support that helped guide Mission in Motion through its digital installation problems.

"I can't speak highly enough of Hologic. They were wonderful about stepping up to the plate to help us," says Cramer. "We relied on them to work with our van manufacturer to resolve issues that would make our brand new van usable. Once that was settled, we've had smooth sailing ever since."

Committed to Extending Services to Women Far Beyond the Breast Center Walls

Lourdes takes a truly comprehensive approach to its breast health services. With radiologists, surgeons, nurse practitioners and pathologists all in one place, patients have easy access to the care they need, often in the same day. Yet while its services are conveniently located under one roof, Lourdes is equally committed to extending these services to women far beyond the Breast Center walls. Whether women lack the means or simply to the time to get their yearly screening, Lourdes is determined to reach them.

"The commitment of our staff and the hospital board is extremely strong and they have nothing but a sincere desire to provide the best," Ziegler says. "We're here for everyone, regardless of their circumstances."

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