

## **MRI used in some instances for breast cancer detection**

(SAULT STE. MARIE) Doctor's rely on a number of imaging tools to detect instances of breast cancer, including breast MRI, available at War Memorial Hospital.

While the most commonly-used tool is digital mammography, certain instances do require the use of magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI.

According to Radiology Director Nichole Matkovich, an MRI is helpful for high-risk patients who have very dense breasts or a very strong family history of breast cancer. In some instances, a patient may also have a palpable mass but neither mammography nor ultrasound gives the physician enough information.

"In the past year, we have performed 25 breast MRIs at War Memorial," Matkovich explained. "They aren't used as a typical screening tool because of the duration of the test itself and the cost, but in some very specific instances, they are critically important."

By contrast, WMH performed 3,050 digital mammograms in the past year. Breast ultrasound is also utilized to determine whether a mass is solid or filled with fluid, which gives the doctor more information with which to make recommendations.

Breast MRIs typically take one hour and require the patient to lay face-down on the MRI bed. Not everyone can use this technology. Those with pacemakers or certain implantable devices cannot receive an MRI.

Matkovich explained that there are other reasons to get an MRI related to breast cancer.

"If someone has had a positive biopsy and they want to determine the extent of the tumor for the purpose of breast reconstruction, they can use MRI. This is fairly rare, as most people have lumpectomies," she explained. Women who have had breast implants and have detected a mass or have had a ruptured implant may also require an MRI.

In addition to MRI, digital mammography and breast ultrasound, WMH also performs stereotactic breast biopsies. This procedure is used in lieu of a surgical biopsy. In the event that the stereotactic biopsy returns a negative result, the patient would have no need for surgery. If, however, the result is positive, the patient would require surgery. In the past year, WMH has performed 41 stereotactic breast biopsies.

Each patient is encouraged to speak with her physician about options for breast cancer detection. For more information about the tools mentioned above, patients may also call the Diagnostic Imaging department at (906) 635-4438.

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