

NORMAN Living

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE OCTOBER 2009 VOLUME 11, NUMBER 10

Intriguing
Architecture

MEN OF OKLAHOMA

Calendar for a Cure

ARTISTIC ENHANCEMENT

Sooners in the Land of Enchantment

Importance of Mammograms

Photo by Erick Gfeller

A picture is worth a thousand words, especially when talking about breast cancer. October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, offering 31 days in which to take an hour out of your busy schedule to have a picture taken – a picture that could save your life.

Aside from skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of the disease among women, accounting for more than one in four cancers diagnosed in U.S. women. In 2005 (the most recent statistics available from the Centers for Disease Control) 186,467 women were diagnosed with breast cancer, and 41,116 of them lost their lives to the disease.

Cancers are a group of diseases that cause cells in the body to change and grow out of control. Most types of cancer cells eventually form a lump or mass called a tumor and are named after the part of the body where the tumor originates. For many women the originating location is the breast.

“Mammography is the most important tool doctors have to help detect breast cancer,” said Dr. Denise Rable, Director of the Norman Regional Breast Care Center.

Safe and highly accurate, a mammogram is an X-ray photograph of the breast. Leading experts recommend women 40 years and older have a mammogram every year. “Mammograms help physicians evaluate changes in the breast tissue,” said Dr. Rable. “The goal of mammography is to differentiate benign changes from more suspicious findings.”

There are two types of mammograms: film and digital. Dr. Barbara Landaal, a radiologist at the Norman Regional Breast Care Center, explains the differences:

“Think about them like you would a digital camera compared to a film camera. The process of conducting the mammogram is the same, but the images are different. A digital mammogram allows radiologists instant access to images of the breast. We can enlarge the

image, change the contrast and highlight specific areas of the breast, which allows more accurate interpretation of the mammogram. With film, we can't really change or manipulate the image.”

Digital images allow the Breast Care Center to use a computer program known as CAD or computer-aided detection. The program can highlight for radiologists specific areas of the breast that may be cause for concern. Studies show the use of CAD has increased the number of cancers caught by 19 percent.

Located on the northeast side of Norman Regional Hospital, the Breast Care Center is a full-service unit that uses state-of-the art technology, including breast MRI. The Breast Care Center also schedules mammograms on Saturdays for the convenience of patients.

Norman Regional's Breast Care Center is one of the few in the state that offers a Nurse Navigator to coordinate patient care. The Nurse Navigator at the NRH Breast Care Center is a breast cancer survivor and registered nurse who helps pa-



Dr. Denise Rable (front), Director of Norman Regional Hospital Breast Care Center with (from left) Karen Saunkeah, Breast Care Center Nurse Navigator, Cindy Barghols, Breast Care Center Supervisor, and Dr. Barbara Landaal, Breast Care Center Radiologist

patients understand diagnostic procedures and treatments.

“We are fortunate to have a nurse navigator to facilitate our patients’ care through diagnosis and treatment. Her knowledge and guidance is very reassuring to our patients,” said Dr. Rable.

Breast cancer not only affects the person diagnosed with it, it changes the lives of the people who love them. That is why Norman Regional’s Breast Care Center offers monthly support groups for patients and the patients’ families. The hospital’s Look Good Feel Better program, supported by the American Cancer Society, is another positive outlet for patients undergoing treatment.

Through Look Good Feel Better, patients get free, high-end makeup, wigs, scarves and other items to help them cope with the physical changes caused by cancer.

Every woman is at risk for breast cancer. Mammograms are the single most effective method of early detection and identifying cancer in its most treatable stages. Women 40 and older should make mammograms part of a yearly physical routine. Monthly breast self-exams are also important for good breast health.

The American Cancer Society and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation recommend the following guidelines:

- annual screening mammography for women beginning at age 40 (If you are under age 40 and have a family history of breast cancer or other concerns about your risk, talk with your doctor about when to begin mammography.)
- a clinical breast examination by your doctor at least every three years beginning at age 20 and every year after 40
- monthly breast self-examinations beginning at age 20
- familiarity with the normal look and feel of your breasts – report any change to your doctor

To schedule your mammogram today, call Norman Regional Hospital’s Breast Care Center at: 307.229.0. ■