

For Immediate Release
December 18, 2007

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Breast MRI Now Available at CRMC

The Cortland Regional Medical Center Imaging Services Department recently added a new diagnostic test to further expand its women’s health services for Cortland County. Breast MRI is now available at the CRMC Outpatient Service Center located on Route 281 in Cortland. The new procedure offers valuable information about many breast conditions that cannot be obtained by other imaging modalities, such as mammography or ultrasound.

“Breast MRI is not a replacement for mammograms or ultrasound imaging,” noted Paul Thomas, Lead Technologist, MRI & Special Procedures, “but rather a supplemental tool for detecting and staging breast cancer and other breast abnormalities.”

According to Thomas, breast MRI is typically used as a follow-up study for a woman who has already had a mammogram but the results were inconclusive, or there is an area of suspicion. For example, the patient may feel the presence of a lump but it is not visualized on a mammogram or ultrasound. MRI is also the modality of choice for women under the age of 40 who are at risk for developing breast cancer (strong family history) and for those who have had a history of breast cancer themselves.

“Because it is more sensitive, breast MRI can detect smaller lesions that are sometimes not visualized by mammography,” said Thomas. “MRI can successfully image the dense breast usually found in younger women for underlying and suspected breast cancers.” In fact, while a mammogram only assesses the breast itself, MRI views more tissue, clear back into the chest wall. Thomas also pointed out that when a lesion is found, this sensitivity helps make a more

definitive determination whether it is a malignant or benign process, which may reduce the need for a stereotactic biopsy.

Unlike mammography, breast MRI does not use radiation (X-rays). Instead a powerful magnetic field and a computer are used to produce detailed images of the soft tissue. It also doesn't have the pain and discomfort associated with mammograms. With a breast MRI, the patient lies on her stomach with both breasts hanging freely into a cushioned recess containing the signal receiver. The entire bed on which she is lying is advanced into the opening of the magnet. The patient is asked to lie still while the computer acquires the images. A small amount of an MRI contrast agent will be administered through an IV to enhance the images. The total examination time is approximately 30 minutes.

“Breast MRI has a number of advantages when compared to mammography,” summed up Thomas. “It provides a more definitive study, greater tissue area can be examined, it does not use radiation, and offers increased comfort to the patient.”

*If you have questions about the new breast MRI, please contact
Paul Thomas at the Outpatient Service Center 758-7620.*

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