

New computer will help detect more breast cancers



The radiologist reviews the mammogram films first and then re-checks suspicious areas identified by the R2 ImageChecker® System.

by Laurie Glenn Cunningham

Hard-to-find breast cancers are now easier to detect thanks to new computer technology at the Cox Women's Center Breast Care Clinic.

The R2 Computer Aided Detection (CAD) System takes a regular film mammogram, digitizes the image and sends it to a second computer that "flags" subtle areas of abnormality that might otherwise go undetected. Up to 20 percent more breast cancers may be detected with the aid of this new technology from Digital Imaging, Inc.

Radiologists who use the CAD System study the mammogram films first. The doctor then compares the original film mammogram to the CAD digital version, looking for any trouble spots. The CAD system gives the radiologist one more tool in diagnosing breast cancer at its earliest stage when it is most curable, says Karen Kramer, administrative director of Hulston Cancer Center.

"We may be able to find breast cancers early for up to 50 more women annually," Kramer says. "The investment in this technology is one more example of CoxHealth's commitment to breast health."

For more information about the CAD System or other women's health issues, please call [Cox Women's Center](tel:886-LADY) at 886-LADY or go to www.coxhealth.com. ❖

Pink Ribbon Luncheon offers humor for healing

by Laurie Glenn Cunningham

The Pink Ribbon Luncheon represents hope and inspiration. And this year those who gather will also find strength and humor.

Sinara O'Donnell, known as the "comedy catalyst," will offer her own brand of humor and healing with her presentation "Starring with Smiles," where she'll draw on her own personal experiences and research.

"It's all about how to use humor in healing, both psychologically and physically," O'Donnell explains.

And she ought to know. O'Donnell's mother is a 28-year breast cancer survivor. Four years ago, she also conquered colon cancer. O'Donnell's father beat bladder cancer 19 years ago.

"We've laughed our way through the pain and the fear," O'Donnell says. "That is very self-evident. We always try to find something humorous around the illness. Not about the illness, but around it."

One example was when her mother was given morphine during a hospital stay for colon cancer. The medication made her say funny things and O'Donnell wrote them all down. At one point she grabbed a nurse by the collar and informed him that "General Custer buried the gold near Corregidor!" Completely puzzled, the nurse responded, "Is that near Bolivar?"

Says O'Donnell: "That's the kind of thing that strikes us funny – turning a crazy event into humor rather than adding to your pain. Cancer itself – there's nothing funny about it. But crazy things happen. You have to focus on anything that's ridiculous or funny."

In addition to her own brand of humor and personal experiences, O'Donnell backs up her humor and healing with research. She says studies are showing that humor is a natural analgesic. Humor can literally remove physical pain. Humor activates the lymphatic system. Humor can enhance the immune system, increasing the body's ability to fight disease.

O'Donnell insists a person doesn't have to be funny to be humorous or to appreciate humor. A former actor and stand-up comedian, Pink Ribbon Luncheon attendees will be entertained with stories from O'Donnell's career and shown how to use acting principles to find humor in their lives.

Breast Care Clinic manager Joanne Schahuber believes O'Donnell's message is just what the doctor ordered for the Pink Ribbon Luncheon. "It's such a feel good thing," she says. "It's so great to be with survivors. There's strength in camaraderie – it's an emotional experience."

The 5th Annual Pink Ribbon Luncheon will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 19 in the 4th Floor Meeting Rooms of Cox Medical Plaza II. The 10th Annual Pink Ribbon Rally will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 12 at the Battlefield Mall, JCPenney East Court.

Call 886-LADY to register for these events. ❖



Sinara O'Donnell

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