

***By Jan Rahn***

### ***Managing Editor***

The radiology department at Perkins County Health Services will soon install a digital mammography machine—the first of its kind in the area.

Detecting breast cancer at its earliest possible stages dramatically increases the chances of being cured.

The new digital mammography system will provide the latest technological advances available to ensure the best image quality in the industry, with emphasis on patient comfort.

According to statistics, 75 percent of women who don't return for future studies give pain as the reason, while 50 percent of women report moderate to extreme discomfort.

With patient comfort being a factor, the new digital mammography machine has tilting paddles that automatically conform to the natural contours of the breast for more uniform and comfortable compression—not to mention the capability of the machine being able to detect small areas of cancer.

“We are very proud to bring this quality care to our community,” said PCHS Administrator Pam Holm.

The machine will be installed the first week in March, with training of technologists taking place the second week of the month.

The radiology department will be looking for patients to come in during the third week in March to begin the imaging, said Holm.

The hospital's annual health fair is scheduled for the weekend of April 30, and a reduced rate for digital mammography will be offered during that time, said Holm.

### What Is

### Digital Mammography?

Digital testing uses the traditional method of an x-ray generator to produce an x-ray beam—the beam is converted into information that can be analyzed, doing away with waiting time for processing of films.

Digital images are reviewed on high resolution monitors with capability of zooming in and magnifying areas of interest.

Contrast and brightness can be adjusted, providing the radiologist better visualization of fine details.

Images from prior studies can be displayed at the same time, providing a method of comparison with use of measuring tools.

### Why Digital Mammography?

Besides comfort and early detection, digital mammography is more beneficial for women for other reasons:

- The method delivers 30-40 percent lower dose of radiation.
- Images are more clear, reducing the need for additional views.
- A much better job of imaging is done in the case of dense breast tissue.
- The need for technologists to leave the exam room to process films is eliminated, providing uninterrupted patient contact.
- Needle localizations can be completed in an average of 12 minutes.
- The possibility of lost films is eliminated.
- Clearer images and improved reviewing tools reduce the need for recalls.