

## Breast screening saves lives

The breast screening program at Renfrew Victoria Hospital is a vital service that has provided more than 37,000 mammography exams to women in the community since January 1995.

More than half of the screens have been provided through the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP), which is a free service across the province where women ages 50 to 75 can self-refer even if they don't have a family doctor. RVH is an OBSP-accredited site.

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women and mammography remains the best screening test. When caught in the early stages, the disease can be treated and the patient can go on to live a healthy life.

RVH's satellite site at St. Francis Memorial Hospital in Barry's Bay saw 914 mammography patients in 2010.

Prevention is key in the detection of breast cancer. "It is necessary for women in our community to understand how important it is, and to take control of their health through breast screening," comments RVH and SFMH CEO, Randy Penney.

### New technology offers many benefits

The wait time for a breast screening exam at either hospital is around three weeks, but that time may become a little shorter in Renfrew with the introduction of digital mammography service. Digital mammography is a powerful diagnostic tool that will better aid the health care team in the early detection of breast cancer.

The current analogue imaging sees what you can't, but the digital mammography equipment sees even more of the breast tissue with the added ability to be magnified and manipulated in digital form. The digitized files are also stored on the Diagnostic Imaging Repository and using the secure system physicians can consult with specialists in other hospitals instantaneously.

"With the high rate of breast cancer we are seeing in this area, I anticipate that we will be able to identify more breast cancers at an earlier stage," says Phil Crozier, head of the Diagnostic Imaging department at RVH, of the advanced technology.

He is also noticing that the age of women being diagnosed with the disease is cause for major concern, as is the case with one of his staff, Sandra Beimers, who was diagnosed with breast cancer last December at age 46.

"We do seem to be seeing a lot more women under age 50 being diagnosed," he says.

Women are urged to begin screening at age 40 and have a mammogram at least every two years. You can begin as early as 30 if you are at high risk for developing breast cancer.

The most recent figures for 2010 show that RVH mammography technologists performed 1,689 screens through the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) and an additional 929 screens from doctor referrals and biopsies. Yet, these numbers should be much higher, figures Crozier.

The replacement system will be able to see more of the breast tissue, Crozier notes.

"It is much less stressful for our patients, due to the reduced need for repeats on required views," he says, adding that another health benefit of the upgrade is less radiation emitted by the digital x-ray.

"The ability to magnify views of the breast without having to bring in the patient for additional scans is going to free up a lot of our technologists to see other patients."

Eliminating film imaging also means no more chemicals to process the tests and physical storage space taken up by the films, which greatly improves the working environment for RVH's six mammogram technologists. There won't be worry of films being misplaced or going missing either, which does occur now when patients have to travel for more testing in Ottawa.

Crozier expects the new equipment to be up and running early in 2012 and expects the transition to run smoothly as there will be no major renovations, just an expansion of the current mammography suite and an upgrade of computers.

The \$700,000 price tag for the equipment, of which there is no provincial funding, is well worth the community fundraising effort, say both Crozier and Penney.

"It's an investment in healthier lives that will pay off for years to come," Penney concludes.

### Who should get screened?

- Women with average risk aged 50 +
- Women with high risk aged 30–69

“It is important that women in the recommended age group get regular mammograms. They are our most important tool in early breast cancer detection.”

- Dr. Allison Clarke



# Empowering all women in the community



Barb Desilets, RVH Foundation Director, leads a mammography discussion with women from the community.

In the battle against breast cancer, RVH is about to declare war by arming itself with state-of-the-art breast screening equipment to enhance the high-quality service already offered to the community.

But the disease won't go down without a fight, and that's where women of Renfrew County are encouraged to stand at the front lines and take ownership not only of their health, but also by playing a major role in bringing this advanced technology to the hospital—for their own sake, and the sake of their mother, their sisters, their daughters, their aunts, neighbours and friends.

Taking control of your health with regular breast screening and becoming actively involved in how improved services are brought to your backyard is the best line of defence against the disease, believes RVH CEO Randy Penney.

The hospital is committed to spend \$700,000 to purchase new Digital Mammography equipment by the end of the year. The RVH Foundation has established a dedicated Digital Mammography Fund to bring this advanced technology one step closer to Renfrew, since there is no provincial funding available for capital expenses.

“Getting behind the cause is one of the healthiest investments you'll ever make. It's not just the female population who need to be concerned, the entire family is affected when a loved one is diagnosed with breast cancer,” comments Penney.

In Ontario, the statistics show that breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among women.

That's why RVH Foundation Director Barb Desilets has taken the lead in hosting a number of Digital Mammography information sessions among small groups of local women where Desilets, Penney and RVH Vice-President of Corporate Services, Julia Boudreau, have been providing an abundance of background statistics and objectives about the project.

**“Getting behind the cause is one of the healthiest investments you'll ever make.”**

— Randy Penney, RVH CEO

It is a unique approach and the aim is to empower the community with knowledge and a better understanding of the challenges a rural hospital faces when it comes to bringing improved services, such as Digital Mammography to Renfrew.

Especially when the Ministry of Health does not fund capital equipment costs, as Penney pointed out at one of the sessions in early June, “which is always a struggle for our Board.”

“This is not just about fundraising,” he told the group. “It's about the importance of the program and how women in our community need to take ownership of the program.”

It's also about sharing ideas and seeking input from those who currently use the services, or who will in the future.

“Our hope is that this is the start of a key group of people that will grow and evolve to become strong advocates for the services and needs at RVH, starting with Digital Mammography and eventually go beyond breast screening by expanding to other departments within the hospital,” notes Desilets.

The response from ladies has been very positive, she says, with a number of the women wanting to become more involved and partnering as ambassadors for the RVH breast screening program, which is exactly the goal of this new initiative.

“Knowledge is power,” she adds. “We're very fortunate to have so many willing women to join forces with us and take action.”

**TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH.**

**Call 1-800-916-6277 to book a screening.**

## DIGITAL MAMMOGRAPHY Q&A

### What is digital mammography?

X-rays are used to produce digital images of the breast similar to standard film mammography, but the images are recorded, read and stored as digital computerized pictures.

### Why update this technology at RVH?

Digital mammography is widely viewed as the new standard of excellence in breast imaging, and will help us to meet our goals of

providing high-quality, safe and timely care to ensure the best outcomes for our patients.

This equipment will also enable us to collaborate more efficiently with other health care facilities.

### How does digital mammography improve care?

Digital mammography is considered more convenient for patients as appointment time and the number of callbacks for repeat imaging are both reduced.

Studies have shown increased detection of cancers in patients with dense breasts with digital mammography.

Less radiation is used than with conventional mammography.

### Are there any other benefits?

The digital images can be manipulated, magnified and adjusted for brightness and contrast for viewing by radiologists and are easily shared electronically with specialists at other locations—the need to transport or transfer films is eliminated.

The use of digital mammography eliminates film and chemical processing. This reduces the time to complete each examination and allows more patients to be seen in a given time.

The elimination of the disposal of toxic processing chemicals and film will have a positive environmental impact, as well as a cost savings for the hospital.

Record retrieval is simplified and a “film library” for storage is no longer required. The dark room can be removed and this space in the mammography suite can be put to more effective use.

It will be easier to attract new staff when we can offer the most up-to-date technology and state-of-the art equipment.

### How much will this cost?

This new equipment will require a significant financial commitment. The purchase price alone will be approximately \$700,000.00. Some staff training will also be required.

No ministry funding is available to offset the expenses.

### When could it be in place?

Installation of the equipment could take place as early as January to March 2012.

# Sandra's story

The following is an excerpt from Sandra Beimers' speech from the *Caring for Tomorrow Golf Classic* supper, held June 10, 2011.

My name is Sandra Beimers and I have worked at Renfrew Victoria Hospital for 12 years in the x-ray department and have seen first hand the importance of the Mammography Unit as a diagnostic tool. Not only have I seen it first hand, but I have experienced it first hand as well.

I have, for the past number of years, had routine mammograms due to a strong history of cancer in my family and know the great quality of care we provide at RVH.

**"Short-term pain for long-term gain. The benefits of a mammogram far outweigh the negatives."**

— Sandra Beimers



Sandra Beimers speaks about her breast cancer journey.

In December 2010, this was no different for me. I had been having some pain in my left breast on and off for a month or two and had seen my doctor who did not feel a lump and so, initially, ordered an ultrasound. After that appointment the pain subsided, but returned constantly for three days in December at which time I booked an ultrasound appointment. At this time the radiologist recommended I have a mammogram as well, since it had been a while since my routine one. Again I had my mammogram with the same great care.

Unfortunately, my news was not so good. I was diagnosed with breast cancer and so started my journey. Having this diagnostic

tool, though, has been a definite asset on this journey. It has been beneficial for further imaging appointments such as an MRI and ultrasound, but also for my consultation with my surgeon. So I know first hand the benefits of this tool.

Mammogram—that word seems to stir different responses from women. Some find it too painful while others don't mind it, but what I like to say is, "Short-term pain for long-term gain." The benefits of a mammogram far outweigh the negatives. Yes, it's not the most pleasant of appointments, but it's a "Necessary Evil."

“As a 15-year survivor of breast cancer, regular screening is a given. With a background in health care, I understand the value and importance of having state-of-the-art equipment. Recently retiring to the area, having a facility with the programs, services, equipment and care that we have at RVH is key in managing my health care. Our community is fortunate.”

— A.H.

“To be able to get quality care close to home made a difference during my journey. A difficult time made easier.”

— D.F.

“I am getting behind the cause and spreading the word. Early detection is the key in the fight against breast cancer.”

— C.F.

## BREAST CANCER STATISTICS

Breast cancer deaths are ranked third-highest of all cancer-related deaths in Renfrew County.

### In Renfrew County:

Each year:

- The breast cancer death rate is 22.7 per 100,000 women.
- The incidence rate of breast cancer is 108.3 per 100,000 women.

The OBSP target for breast screening for women aged 50–69 is 90% by 2020.

The current mammography rate in Renfrew County is 78.3% (*Statistics Canada. 2011. Health Profile.*).

### Probability of developing or dying from breast cancer

One in nine women is expected to develop breast cancer during her lifetime.



One in 29 will die of it.



### Trends in breast cancer

Breast cancer incidence rose steadily from 1980 to the early 1990s, partly because of increased mammography screening. Breast cancer death rates have declined in every age group since at least the mid 1980s due, in part, to early detection through screening.

**Since starting OBSP in January 1995, RVH has completed:**

**15,140** mammography exams

**21,378** OBSP screens

## Make an investment in healthier lives that will pay off for years to come

New technology that helps our health care professionals to deliver improved patient care comes at a significant price. Government funding for hospitals does not include the costs of state-of-the-art technology or new equipment.

No matter how large or small, every initiative is important to reach our overall goal.

### There are many ways you can support this key project

- spread the news—share information about the cause in the community
- donate your time
- host an event
- involve your family, friends and workplace colleagues

If you have an idea or would like more information, please contact the RVH Foundation at 613-432-4851 ext. 263, or email [info@rvhfoundation.com](mailto:info@rvhfoundation.com)

## Donors make the difference

In the past, RVH has received generous support for its mammography unit. The Amigos were the cornerstone of this support and those efforts have continued. As the word spreads about the digital mammography project, the community's kindness shines through.

Our thanks to those who have begun to support the effort:

- Calabogie Lions Club
- Cougars Conquering Cancer
- Amigos
- OVG Inc. employee golf event
- Really Cool Initiatives (Kathy & Norm Dagg Productions)
- RVH Foundation—Caring for Tomorrow Charity Golf Classic
- Sterling's No Frills—Joe Fresh



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OVG Inc.

Funds raised directly benefit our community—every dollar will go towards the purchase of the new equipment to ensure the best care for the women in our lives.

## 1-2-3, IT'S ALL ABOUT ME...

 **LEARN:** breast cancer facts, risks and prevention

 **KNOW:** you can take control of your health

 **ACT:** go for regular screening

## Cancer risk factors

- Tobacco use
- Alcohol consumption
- Obesity

## Tips for prevention

- Healthy eating
- Active living
- Regular screening

## Why go for regular screening?

- Early detection is important for successful treatment
- To take control of your health
- A clean bill of health offers peace of mind



## The Ontario Breast Screening Program/ Diagnostic Imaging team at RVH

Our caring professionals include Melanie Stafford (secretary), Debbie Tiernay (mammographer), Charlene Shaw (nurse examiner) and Judi Gilmore (secretary). Seated are Sarah Brisco (mammographer) and Phil Crozier (Head of DI dept). Missing: Debbie Howes, Suzie Campbell, Lesley Eady, Meredith Brabant (mammographers) and Sandra Beimers (secretary).

## Did you know?

RVH has been a clinical partner with Cambrian College for training Medical Radiation Technologists since 1994. We have enjoyed an excellent relationship with Cambrian and have hired several graduates from the program.

"It is vitally important that we offer state-of-the-art equipment in order to maintain this mutually beneficial training program and to attract new staff," says RVH Vice President of Corporate Services Julia Boudreau.



## ACT

## 5 km Run/Walk, October 15, 2011

**Time:** 9 a.m. start (Registration opens at 8 a.m.)

**Location:** Renfrew Town Hall

**Cost:** \$30 (\$20 for students) OR free registration with pledges of \$60 or over (pledges will receive tax receipt)

## Proceeds will go to the digital mammography fund at RVH

For more information, call Diana at 432-4851 ext. 276