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# Hospital expands cancer detection

## Local facility gets new biopsy tool

By Stephen Wall, Staff Writer

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COLTON - Doctors at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center now have extensive use of a new tool in the fight against breast cancer, thanks to an outside contract.

For several years, the county hospital has been offering the new technology - called stereotactic biopsies - in the diagnosis of breast cancer, increasing the odds of surviving the disease.

The Centers for Disease Control estimate that this year, 178,480 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States. There are 1.6 million women in the country who don't know they have breast cancer, according to the CDC.

But previous technology and equipment limited the number of patients who could have the procedure.

Last month, the medical center began offering the improved care through a partnership with Dedicated Biopsy Services of Norco, allowing more patients to take advantage of the procedure.

The services are offered inside a trailer parked outside the hospital's emergency room every other week.

The technology is offered at other hospitals, but its arrival at Arrowhead is significant because the county medical center serves many low-income and uninsured patients who can't afford care at private facilities.

The new biopsy equipment allows the patient to lie prone, with the breast placed through an opening in the exam table, for more comfort.

Previously, stereotactic biopsies were done with the patient in the sitting position.

The new system allows radiologists to reach most areas of concern in the breast.

"It gives us a 360-degree range so we can usually reach the area we are trying to pinpoint," said Dr. David Wong, a surgeon at Arrowhead. "In some instances in the past, the equipment didn't allow us to do this. In those cases, the patient had to be sent out to another medical facility or was given the option of a surgical biopsy."

Dr. Fred Orr, chairman of Arrowhead's medical imaging department and a radiologist at the hospital, said the new technology has several benefits.

The stereotactic biopsy, a digital, X-ray-guided procedure, is less invasive and allows patients to recover more quickly because it is done using local anesthesia and requires a smaller incision - typically about a quarter-inch in length.

Surgical biopsies are done under general anesthesia and require incisions of up to 2 inches long.

"It's more comfortable, faster and more accurate than what we had before," Orr said of the new technology. "It's also cheaper than having to go into the operating room and have surgery."

Wong said the hospital is now scheduling about 12 stereotactic, or nonsurgical, biopsies per month. But Wong estimated that number could soon double because of the new technology.