

# Dr. Jean Weigert wants us to know about breast-specific gamma imaging

Finally, a machine that doesn't squeeze your boobs until you lose your breath and faint. "It is really cool. What can I tell you?" says Dr. Jean Weigert, a radiologist who likes to talk about the Dilon 6800.

It's the latest tool in the arsenal to fight breast cancer at the Women's Center of the Southington campus of the Hospital of Central Connecticut. In 2006, the former Bradley Memorial Hospital merged with New Britain General to form the Hospital of Central Connecticut.

Us old-timers still like to call it Bradley. I hadn't visited the hospital since the late '70s or early '80s when I covered hospitals and health care out of the former Meriden bureau of the Register. On a recent visit after talking to Dr. Jean, I ran into Hamden High class of 1974 buddy Jim Battipaglia (actually he is the good friend of the Daley boys, boyfriend Bob, and his twin, Bill.) Good guy, that Jim the optician. Hadn't seen him in years and when I boldly walked into his office and asked him to tighten my glasses to save me a trip to a store, he did so without complaint. Thanks, Jim!

Anyhow, so Dr. Jean, whose specialty is women's imaging, is thrilled about this new machine that picks up abnormalities really well. And what's even better is the machine is noninvasive. A separate needle gives you a radioactive isotope. You don't have to go through a tube like with an MRI, which helps hefty claustrophobes like myself. And, as I said, it doesn't have to smash you to work.

The Dilon 6800 uses breast-specific gamma imaging, which is an alternative to ultrasound screening. And it could be more specific than an MRI.

"I've had several patients with questionable MRI findings and they have BSGI, which defines true abnormalities, and if any need to be biopsied," she said.

The Hospital of Central Connecticut is the only place in Connecticut to offer breast-specific gamma imaging testing. BSGI studies can distinguish noncancerous tissue from cancerous and find

tiny lesions. It's especially helpful for patients with dense breast tissue such as myself, or for those with questionable mammogram or ultrasound results, known lumps not seen on other imaging tools and breast scar tissue.

"It's such a helpful tool, an exciting tool," said Dr. Jean, who explained that whenever we are tested, each day is a "point in time. All we can do is be vigilant."

In April, Dr. Jean received the 2009 Breast Journal Abstract Award at the American Society of Breast Disease's 33rd annual symposium for her abstract, Breast-Specific Gamma Imaging Compared to Breast Ultrasound in Patients with Mammographic Abnormalities Requiring Diagnostic Evaluation.

The study used data from 2005-07 that found that compared to ultrasound imaging, BSGI provides more sensitivity in the ability to locate an abnormality and is more specific in findings for breast cancer and other abnormalities. Data compared results of 70 patients who had both BSGI and ultrasound tests. The tests, which also included biopsy, were conducted based on mammogram results.

This was the first study comparing breast ultrasound to BSGI results for cancer diagnosis, she said.

The goal, Dr. Jean says, is to



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Hospital of Central Connecticut's Dr. Jean Weigert has high praise for the Dilon 6800 imaging machine, which is an alternative to ultrasound. Contributed photos



See DeMatteo, C3

## DeMatteo: Up at the Hospital of Central Connecticut

Continued from C1

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use the machine as often as possible to help in the diagnosis of abnormalities that can't be diagnosed in mammograms and ultrasounds. "It's also to reassure patients who are worried that they may have an abnormality that they don't have anything wrong," she said.

Dr. Jean says that the mammogram is the "road map" to all testing, and that if there's something different from the year before, it needs to be evaluated. "It's a puzzle, and we try to pull it all together."

The Hospital of Central Connecticut is also happy to report that it has a virtual comprehensive breast center. Once a week, medical professionals from all disciplines, as well as nurse navigator Donna Boehm, meet to review every breast cancer diagnosis. The meetings help develop a solid care plan for each patient, Dr. Jean said. Boehm can be reached at (860) 224-5900, Ext. 6307.