



The Sheridan Press/Michael Sullivan

From left, MRI Technician Cheri Shiek, MRI and Mammography Technician Stephanie Williams, and Mammography Technician Sheila Lynch stand before an MRI machine Thursday at Sheridan Radiology. The machine can be used to detect cancer.

## Checkup reminder

• Women are asked to get annual mammograms

**By Kristen Salamon**

*Staff reporter*

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and Sheridan Memorial Hospital is reminding women to schedule their annual mammograms.

"This is something we want to remind women of this month, but it is also something we want to encourage women to do all year," said Danae Brandjord, marketing manager at Memorial.

According to the American Cancer Society's breast cancer facts

and figures from 2007-2008, in Wyoming the breast cancer incidence for every 100,000 white women is 120. The rate for African-American women in Wyoming is 115 of every 100,000 women.

According to Dr. Tracy Coe, director of medical oncology at the Welch Cancer Center, of the seven patients she saw Wednesday morning, two were breast cancer patients.

"That is a pretty typical morning for us," Coe said. "So I'd say between one-quarter and one-fourth of our patients are breast

cancer patients."

While the ACS, Memorial Hospital, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention all suggest women over 40 get annual mammograms, many women throughout the country and in Wyoming don't.

According to data from the 2004 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System available on the ACS Web site, only 58.3 percent of U.S. women 40 years and older had a mammogram within the past year.

In Wyoming, that percentage drops to 51.6 percent.

"It is such a common cancer that

it is a pity not to be caught early, because that is where we make all the progress," Coe said. "Mammograms are such an easy thing, and they are really pretty effective in detecting breast cancer."

Mammography is a low-dose X-ray procedure that allows physicians to see the internal structure of the breast. On average, mammography will detect about 80 to 90 percent of breast cancers in women without symptoms, according to the ACS.

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# Checkup

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According to Brandjord, Memorial Hospital suggests women under 40 should also take precautions.

“Women over 20 should perform monthly self-exams, and women between 20 and 39 should have a physical breast exam every three years,” Brandjord said. “These tests are extremely important because 70 percent of women who get breast cancer have no risk factors.”

Coe said that breast cancer only runs in families about 15 percent of the time.

“That is something people are often clueless about; they think that if it isn’t in their family, they don’t need to worry about it,” Coe said. “That is absolutely not true. But if it is in your

family, you should be extra vigilant in getting your screenings.”

Yearly magnetic resonance imaging has also been recommended for some women at high risk for breast cancer. According to the ACS, while the MRI is more sensitive in detecting cancers than mammograms, it also has a higher rate of false positives, which may lead to unnecessary biopsies and recalls.

Sheridan Memorial Hospital began offering breast MRIs in the spring through Sheridan Radiology.

“This test can be ordered by physicians if the patient is at high risk for breast cancer, has had problematic mammograms, previous breast cancer, a family history of breast cancer, and other

reasons that might indicate further testing,” Brandjord said.

According to Chris Bilyeu, medical imaging manager with the hospital, the breast MRI screening is the latest technology that can detect lesions and monitor the blood flow to determine whether the lesion is likely to be benign or cancerous.

“Cancers like blood flow, so they will develop vessels; the more vascular a lesion, the more likely it is to be a cancer,” Bilyeu said.

“The earlier you can detect a cancer, the better your chance for survival,” Bilyeu said. “The longer it is there without detection, the more chance there is for it to spread and the more limited your options become in fighting it.”