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Catherine Cooke talks about the new machines with the guests at an open house Thursday and operates one of the new Hologic Genius 3D Mammography units at Sturdy Memorial Hospital.

Sturdy unveils the latest in mammogram technology

BY PAIGE ALLEN
SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

ATTLEBORO — The latest mammogram technology has come to Attleboro.

The imaging department at Sturdy Memorial Hospital unveiled two Hologic Genius 3D Mammography units at an open house Thursday.

The machines take a series of pictures and a computer reconstructs them in a way that technicians analyzing the pictures are looking at the breast in cross sections, mammographer Catherine Cooke said.

The technology will allow radiologists to better identify small or subtle breast cancers that might have been hidden or not seen on standard mammograms.

“The ultimate for all of them is that we’ll find more breast cancer,” Cooke said.

Cooke said the new technology will also lead to fewer callbacks for patients because radiologists will be able to better see and identify what they’re seeing in the photos.

For example, a lump of dense tissue folded upon itself might have been mistaken for something more serious and

led to a callback for further tests. But, with the new machine, radiologists will be able to see that it’s not cause for concern.

Heather Hardie, lead mammography physician at Sturdy, said the machines will allow them to look at what’s in each section of the breast.

“This shows us a lot more information,” she said.

The department received the machines in November, and began using them in January. The machines do everything the old mammogram machines did, including the traditional mammogram.

Hardie said they’re not using the 3D technology on every patient because it’s “not necessarily beneficial for every patient,” and said different methods — traditional mammogram versus the 3D technology — are used based on the density of the breast tissue.

The 3D technology was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2011, and Hardie said they’ve been hearing about the technology since the early stages of its development, but it’s been coming into practice within the last year.

“We’re on the cutting edge,” she said.