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Breaking Medical News

Local Physician Believes Increased Awareness of Breast MRI Will Save Michigan Women's Lives

Mid-Michigan Women's Imaging Expert Comments on Applegate's 'Oprah' Appearance, Importance of Breast MRI

Flint, MI (October 7, 2008) -- As we enter Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, public attention to the experience of Christina Applegate (who appeared Tuesday, September 30 on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, WNEM 5 TV, 4:00 p.m.) and the MRI she credits with saving her life puts the spotlight on the importance of radiology in early detection, diagnosis, and treatment planning.

"Most noteworthy to me as a physician specialized in breast imaging was the attention Ms. Applegate and her doctors paid to factors in her history that put her at higher risk for breast cancer," said David Strahle, M.D., President of Regional Medical Imaging (RMI) in Flint. "Recognizing her high-risk status was critical in the wise decisions for her to begin screenings at an earlier age than is typically recommended, and to use Breast MRI in addition to mammography due to her dense breast tissue."

A Flint native and graduate of Michigan State University's College of Human Medicine, Dr. Strahle played a pioneering role in the development of Fourth-Dimensional Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (4D Breast MRI) technology. RMI is currently one of the few centers in the United States to offer 4D Breast MRI.

"Compared to mammography or conventional breast MRI," says Dr. Strahle, "4D Breast MRI provides physicians with a wealth of additional data that can increase the accuracy of diagnosis and the likelihood of successful treatment."

According to the American Cancer Society (*CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians* Vol. 57, No. 2: 75-89), studies have shown that MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scans have a success rate of 71 to 100 percent in detecting tumors in high-risk populations, compared to only 16 to 40



percent for mammography. In view of these increased capabilities, the American Cancer Society now recommends an annual Breast MRI, in addition to a mammogram, for some women who, like Applegate, have known factors increasing their lifetime risk.

“The wide publicity on Ms. Applegate’s breast cancer experience and the role of Breast MRI in her successful diagnosis and treatment will broaden awareness among patients and their physicians that, for women in higher risk groups, an annual mammogram might not be enough,” says Dr. Strahle. “Certainly women should consult with their primary care physicians to determine the approach to screening that best suits them as individuals, but the important message in Ms. Applegate’s story is that it’s essential for women to make sure that their physicians are fully informed about their personal and family medical histories.”

Applegate, 36, began routine breast screenings at age 30 due to her mother’s status as a two-time breast cancer survivor, which put her in a higher risk category as defined by the American Cancer Society.

“Better diagnostic imaging technologies put us even closer to eliminating breast cancer as a killer in our community, which is why we strive to stay at the forefront of diagnostic and screening technologies like 4D Breast MRI,” says Dr. Strahle. “But the example of a public figure like Ms. Applegate does more to increase the awareness of the general public than anything we in the medical community could do on our own, so we’re grateful for her courage in discussing her experience publicly. Her courage will undoubtedly save lives.”

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About RMI

RMI began in 1985 as a private, outpatient-based imaging facility with a goal of offering patients an alternative to hospitals for radiology services. Today RMI continues its commitment of providing state-of-the-art equipment in a patient-friendly atmosphere at its offices in Flint, Fenton, Grand Blanc and Davison. For more information, visit www.rmipc.net