

[Ridge hospital's new, faster scanner to improve results](#)

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PARADISE - Patients at Feather River Hospital needing advanced computer scans to examine health conditions, such as heart problems, may find themselves underneath a new imaging system that operates faster than before.

The hospital recently installed a new GE Infinia Hawkeye imaging system incorporating two types of technology to more accurately examine a patient more quickly.

Brian Slusarenko, the hospital's lead technologist for nuclear medicine, said the new machine allows the hospital to study more patients with greater sensitivity.

"It's a great step because we're already increasing our workload," Slusarenko said.

The new machine includes a single-photon emission tomography computed scanner, or SPECT. Before a patient is scanned, she is injected with or eats a very small amount of a radioactive isotope. The machine's two SPECT scanners detect the isotope in the patient's body and build a three-dimensional model of the portion of the patient's body being examined.

Slusarenko said the device can scan a patient's body almost twice as fast as the previous one-scanner device installed in 1992. The device's two scanners can rotate around the patient's body and are reconfigurable to quickly examine a patient in a variety of positions - standing, sitting or lying down.

The device's biggest advantage is that it includes a computed tomography scanner working in concert with the SPECT scan. The CT scanner uses multiple X-ray scans and computers to build a 3-D model of the area being studied. A technician can overlay the CT scan over the results of the SPECT scan to aid analyses by helping compensate for different body masses.

One patient lay underneath the scanner Tuesday. His arms were raised above his head as the scanner heads rotated around his chest for a heart exam. The monitor attached to the scanner slowly ticks down the duration of the scan - 15 minutes for the SPECT and 4 minutes for the CT. Slusarenko said it would take twice as long for a single scanner to complete the SPECT scan.

Although it's not as advanced as the standalone CT scanner, Slusarenko said the advantage of including it on the same machine as the SPECT scanner allows doctors and technicians to immediately compare the results from both machines.

Previously, a patient would receive his CT scan at a different time and location than his SPECT scan, according to radiologist Dr. James Warren. He said the results didn't necessarily match.

"When we do both at the same time, it's much easier," Warren said.

Slusarenko said the SPECT scanner is very powerful, but not very precise. The CT scanner can help shed more light into a specific condition.

Hospital employee Barbara Miller, from medical records, recently underwent a scan to examine some heart problems. She said the scan seemed shorter than before and the system's bedding was more padded.

"It was more comfortable than the last time," Miller said.

She said the new scanner wasn't claustrophobic. To soothe patients, there is a large, illuminated picture of a palm tree affixed to the ceiling above the patient.

The new scanner replaces a 22-year-old machine where the patient had to be moved around the device to capture multiple images. Interestingly, the new device cost about \$500,000 - the same amount as the scanners purchased in 1983 and 1992.

The 1992 scanner will be used in addition to the new machine. Before the addition of the new machine, waits in the emergency room for the scanner used to be up to three hours.

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