

BREAST CANCER

Digital Mammograms

Diagnosed with breast cancer in June, Mary Alden says she feels “lucky.”

Shown: Mary Alden finds spending time with her grandchildren, Kylie (left) and Louis (right) comforting, while she continues treatment for breast cancer. Mrs. Alden was one of the first patients to have a 3D mammogram at the Steeplechase Cancer Center at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset. The new, state-of-the-art, advanced imaging system enables doctors to diagnose tumors more clearly and accurately.

“Lucky” because she was one of the first patients at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset (RWJ Somerset) to have a 3D mammogram, part of the comprehensive care provided at the Sanofi US Breast Care Program at the Steeplechase Cancer Center. This new, state-of-the-art technology helped radiologists diagnose the lump – which was only 1 centimeter in size and was too small to feel – as stage I invasive ductal carcinoma. Because it was found in its earliest stage, it had not spread to the lymph nodes.

Mrs. Alden, 61, of Ringoes, was able to have a breast-conserving lumpectomy to remove the cancer, rather than a mastectomy to remove the entire breast.

“When I was first diagnosed with breast cancer, it was a time of high anxiety and fear,” Mrs. Alden said. “After learning that the type of breast cancer I had was able to be treated and cured, I felt very lucky that my breast cancer was detected in early stage 1. My mother underwent a double mastectomy for breast cancer.”

She is now undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatment at the Steeplechase Cancer Center as well as hormone therapy to prevent the cancer from coming back.

Her radiologist Myra Wedmid, MD, Co-Director of the Sanofi US Breast Care Program, said Mrs. Alden’s lesion didn’t look suspicious on a 2D image, but on the 3D mammography it was “very obvious” that the mass was abnormal.



Shown: Kathleen Toomey, MD (left), Medical Director of the Steeplechase Cancer Center at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset and Mrs. Alden’s oncologist, developed a treatment plan after consulting with Myra Wedmid, MD (right), radiologist and Co-Director of the Sanofi US Breast Care Program at the Steeplechase Cancer Center at RWJ Somerset, who used 3D mammography technology to diagnose Mrs. Alden’s cancer and put her on the path to treatment.

“It’s possible by the time it showed up on a standard mammography, it would have been a larger lesion,” she said. “3D mammography detects more invasive breast cancers than standard mammography because it provides clearer images and more accurately shows the size and shape of abnormalities. It gives me more confidence as a radiologist in determining whether something looks cancerous or benign.”

3D mammogram, also known as a digital breast tomosynthesis exam, moves in an arc over the breasts to capture multiple images of the breast from various angles that create a clear, 3D reconstruction of the breast, which allows radiologists to examine the patient’s breast tissue in far greater detail.

By picking up invasive tumors and abnormalities more easily, it helps increase accuracy and avoids false alarms.

“3D mammography is much more accurate and finds more cancers,” said Mrs. Alden’s oncologist Kathleen Toomey, MD, who is the Medical Director of the Steeplechase Cancer Center. “Because it is better at finding cancer, it helps avoid unnecessary tests and biopsies that women don’t need which can lead to unnecessary fear and anxiety.”

“The 3D mammography was definitely beneficial for me,” said Mrs. Alden. “I would never get a mammogram without 3D.”

As part of her recovery, she has participated

in support and education programs at the Steeplechase Cancer Center, including “Look Good, Feel Better” and “Wigs and Accessories” classes.

She plans to return to work as a network technician for Verizon, where she has worked for 28 years. She and her husband, James, also enjoy going on cruises and spending time with their two grandchildren.

“I am so grateful to Dr. Wedmid and her staff who were able to detect my cancer in the earliest stages when it was curable,” she said. “Now I am looking forward to getting on with life.”

Visit www.rwjmammo.com or call 1-888-MD-RWJUH.

STEEPLECHASE CANCER CENTER SUPPORT PROGRAMS:

Look Good, Feel Better
Monday, February 15
10 a.m. to 12 noon

In Partnership with American Cancer Society

Wigs and Accessories
Tuesdays, January 19 and March 15
1 to 3 p.m.

In Partnership with American Cancer Society

Call 1-888-MD-RWJUH