Picture perfect: Training helps mammography techs improve imaging

By **ZACH BENOIT**

Oct 4, 2016
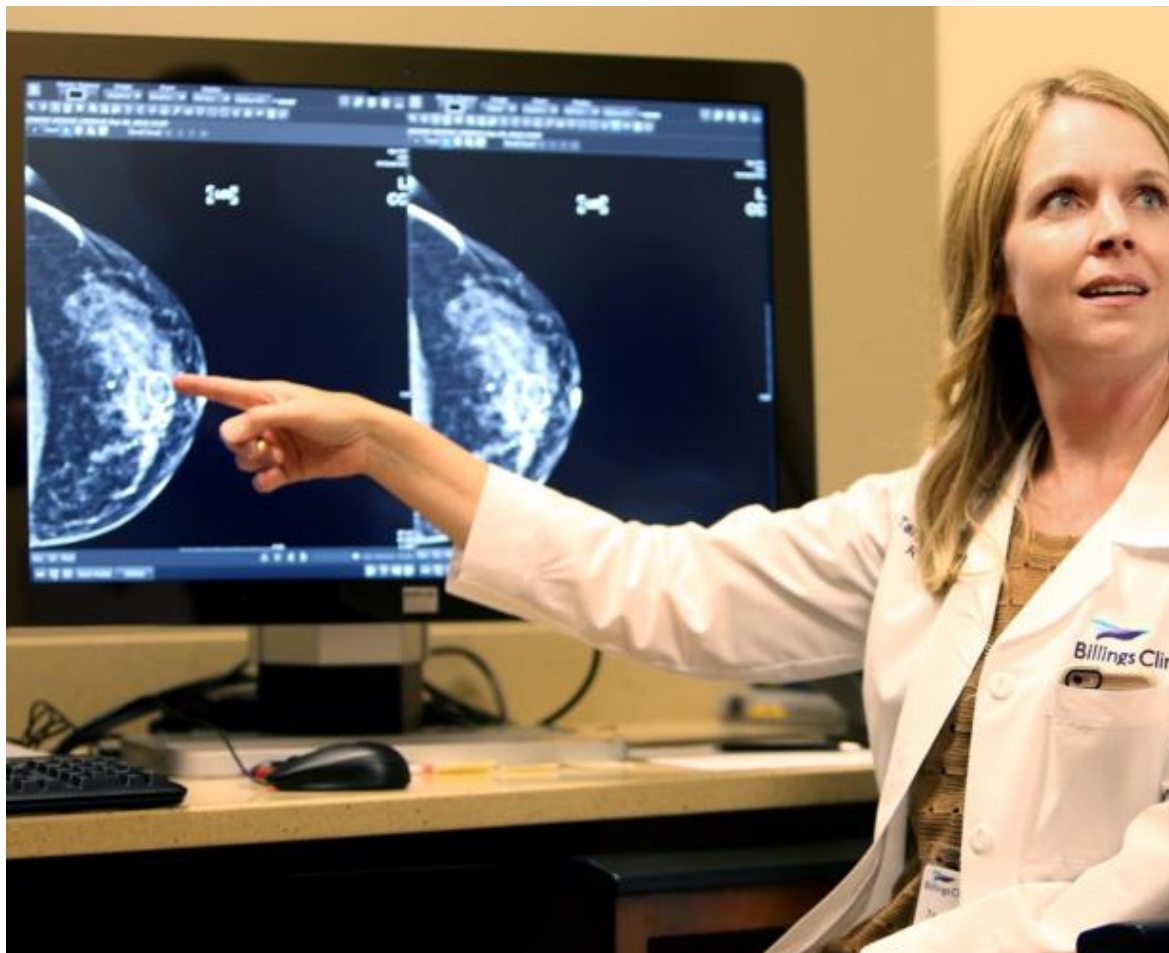
Dr. Tara Bowman talks about mammography training at Billings Clinic.
CASEY PAGE, Gazette Staff

By ZACH BENOIT

Jennifer Jodrey, a Billings Clinic mammography technologist, didn't even know she needed the training.

Performing mammograms — using low-dose X-rays to image examine the tissue of a woman's breast, most often to detect cancer — is her job, and she's been doing it daily without problems.

But it only took a day or so of training with Louise Miller, education director and co-founder of Mammography Educators, to see the difference in her work.

"It's been amazing," Jodrey said. "It's different than the way I did it before. We all had our own way, but with this it's all the same. I don't have to work harder, it's just a different way of doing it."

Jodrey is one of four mammography technologists at Billings Clinic who spent a week in late September learning from Miller standardized placement techniques designed to produce consistent, quality images across the department, as well as how to teach them to others.

People are also reading…

1. **Two killed in separate motorcycle accidents in Billings area**
2. **Shot putter runs 100-meter hurdles to save team from disqualification after teammates injured**
3. **Judge declares law, rule on updating birth certificates unconstitutional**
4. **Revisiting the Rosebud: With no road, it's a humbling hike through brush and across rock - so much rock**

Miller has worked in the mammography field for more than 30 years and helped to found Mammography Educators, which works to implement high-quality and consistent breast imaging standards. She's trained more than 50,000 technologists worldwide and has consulted at numerous hospitals and institutions across the U.S., including the Mayo Clinic, Harvard Medical School, UCLA and Stanford University.

"Most technologists in this country are not taught a standardized positioning method," she said. "My goal is to get everybody doing it this way."

She teaches a method of positioning the breast in the imaging equipment developed through personal experience and consulting experts in the field that, if used, provides consistent results and is often able to image more tissue.

The benefit there is that, with consistent results, radiologists know they'll be seeing similar images each time they view a patient's results, no matter who did the work or when they did it.

"They're all getting this standard, high-quality, universal mammogram," said Robyn Hadley, one of the mammography techs who received the training.

Dr. Tara Bowman, a breast radiologist at Billings Clinic, said she's already seen a "measurable difference" in mammography results and image quality thanks to the standardized methods the techs have learned.

"We were already doing great mammography before," she said. "We just wanted to be the best. We saw this opportunity and had the support from the administration."

The techs at the hospital underwent the Train-the-Trainer program, which allows them to pass the knowledge on to the more than 20 other mammography techs throughout Billings Clinic and its regional facilities.

Michael Wright, the hospital's director of radiology, said the organization as a whole conducts more than 20,000 screenings annually among all of its facilities, including about 13,000 on the Billings campus, and that standardized methods help improve service and care to those patients.

"This is about our patients," Jordrey said. "It's about making a difference for them."

Miller noted that staff must commit to the training and that the team at Billings Clinic did so enthusiastically.

Later this fall, she'll return for a follow-up visit with the staff to ensure everything's in place properly.

"I don't just come in and teach something and leave," she said. "We want them to be able to help themselves so they can be real assets."