

BREAST CANCER... *Diagnosis & Treatment at SOCH*

Recent headlines blasted the exciting news! For the second consecutive year, fewer people have died from cancer in the United States. For those with a diagnosis of breast cancer, the story is even more promising, as rates have seen a steady decline since 1990.

Dr. Renee Georges, a surgeon on the medical staff of SOCH, credits early detection and ongoing advances in cancer treatment for the good news, but notes that there still are women who are not getting the message.

“Unfortunately, I see a number of women with late-stage breast cancer who never had a routine mammogram,” said Dr. Georges, who cites an alarming trend. “Coming on the heels of good news about the decline in cancer deaths is troubling news from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fewer American women are getting mammograms, a screening test that can find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat.”

According to Dr. Georges, women should have a mammogram every year, starting at age 40. Women with a family history of breast cancer should talk to their doctor about starting breast cancer screening earlier. Mammography is available at SOCH in the Women’s Imaging Center in the Hospital’s main campus on Route 72, and at the SOCH



Centers for Health in Little Egg Harbor and Forked River.

“A mammogram can detect an abnormality long before the lump can be felt,” Dr. Georges explained. “Although the presence of a lump can cause tremendous anxiety, nearly 80 percent of breast lumps turn out to be non-cancerous.”

*Fortunately for women, a number of **minimally invasive** procedures are available to diagnose breast disease.*

Fortunately, a number of minimally invasive procedures are available to diagnose breast disease, sparing the patient the need for a more complex surgical procedure to remove the lump. Ultrasound guided biopsy and stereotactic breast biopsy are procedures performed using local anesthesia. With the aid of imaging equipment that allows the surgeon to see inside the body, the physician guides the needle through the skin to obtain a tissue sample of the suspicious lesion.

Sentinel Node Biopsy is used to determine if cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes. This involves the injection of a blue dye and some radioactive material into the tumor. The surgeon is then able to identify and biopsy the first lymph node into which a tumor drains, which is the one that may be most likely to contain cancer cells.

Once a positive diagnosis is made, and the stage of the disease is determined, the patient will benefit from the expertise of the board-certified physician specialists and certified oncology nurses at the Cancer Center at SOCH.

“Treatment for breast cancer usually involves surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy or a combination of some or all of these options,” said Dr. Georges, who works with medical oncologists and radiation oncologists at SOCH to develop a plan of care for each patient.

According to Dr. Georges, some women may be appropriate candidates for breast preserving surgery called a lumpectomy. “This involves the removal of the breast lump and surrounding normal tissue, without removing the entire breast.”

Other surgical options performed by Dr. Georges include a mastectomy, which involves removal of the entire breast, or a modified radical mastectomy, which involves removal of the breast and some of the lymph nodes under the armpit.

“The type of treatment will depend upon the woman’s medical history, and the type and stage of disease,” she said.

*For referral to a **surgeon** or a **cancer specialist** at SOCH, call **SOCHConnect**, at **609-978-3400**.*



*Renee Georges, MD
surgeon on the medical staff
at SOCH*

Dr. Georges is a graduate of Yale University and earned her medical degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C. She completed a General Surgery Residency at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C. and a Vascular Surgery Fellowship at Englewood Hospital in Englewood, NJ. She was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Thoracic Surgery at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX. Her practice focuses on breast diseases.