

## **New Technology to Tackle Breast Cancer**

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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### **PRINT SCRIPT**

Nearly every American knows someone who has or has had breast cancer. Each year, over 260,000 cases are diagnosed in women and approximately 2,400 in men. Roughly 42,000 women and 500 men die from the disease each year.

Early detection, through mammogram screenings, is one of the best ways to reduce the mortality rate of breast cancer. The National Institutes of Health reports a 40% mortality reduction for those who get annual screenings, compared to those who do not.

“One of the main goals of the screening involves early diagnosis. Then we can approach the patient and treat the disease in a more timely fashion to avoid further problems,” says Dr. Alejandro Sanz, a General Surgeon with a specialty in breast cancer at OSF HealthCare.

Dr. Sanz has seen some major advances in breast health technology over the years at OSF HealthCare.

“We are able to diagnose tumors at the earliest stage, very tiny tumors,” Dr. Sanz says. “We are getting so much better with biopsies. Ultrasound guided needle biopsies are how we normally make the diagnosis.”

Dr. Sanz says doctors used to use wires to identify the lesion. This would cause patients to have to come early in the morning to get that wire put through their chest into the tumor. Then they’d go into the operating room where doctors would make an incision following the wire.

“But now, we brought new technology here in the last 3 years using special magnetic beads that don’t use any radiation. These are placed in the tumor prior to surgery, then in the OR we use a special device that tracks the bead so we know exactly where to cut into the breast,” Dr. Sanz adds.

Dr. Sanz says in addition to patients being fearful of the disease, there’s also a concern from the cosmetic side of things. But he adds that improvements in technology have also resulted in improvements in breast conservation surgery.

“That decreases chances for complications and there’s a smaller wound,” Dr. Sanz says. “There’s a big psychological benefit to the patient. Cosmetic outcome is a huge importance, not having a huge scar across their chest.”

Data from the American Cancer Society recommends women have the option to start screening every year between ages 40-44. The recommendation then upgrades to yearly screenings at age 45, and screenings every two years by age 55.

Dr. Sanz says breast cancer is a very complex disease that's difficult to understand. This is why it's extremely important to have a multidisciplinary team help explain the treatment plan in a way that's easy to understand.

"It's a big team of people," Dr. Sanz says. "The communication is very fluid between patients and doctors."

Another concern some patients have is when they're experiencing breast pain. Dr. Sanz says in most cases, that isn't a sign of breast cancer.

"Usually breast cancer doesn't hurt. It's asymptomatic, unless you present at a very advanced stage," Dr. Sanz says. "But it's very important to review the images with the patients so they can see them with their own eyes."

OSF HealthCare offers a full range of diagnostic tests and treatments for breast cancer. This includes 3D mammography, breast biopsies, MRIs, and more. Visit [osfhealthcare.org/breasthealth](https://osfhealthcare.org/breasthealth) to learn more about breast health and see locations and providers in your area.