

A glimpse into the future

At Kootenai Medical Center, a group of radiologists is leading a quiet revolution.

Over the past several years, North Idaho Imaging Center (a joint venture of KMC and the physicians of Radiology Associates of North Idaho) has invested more than \$5 million to bring our community the most advanced technology available anywhere.

Four state-of-the-art machines—two CT (computed tomography) scanners and two MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) machines—are the foundation for this. The machines complement each other but differ in their approach.

A CT scan produces cross sectional images of the body that the physician can study to make a diagnosis. For every 360-degree rotation, the new CT scanners take

16 slices instead of one. Because of its speed, patients are out in a fraction of the time. The volume of data collected is exponentially greater, and software programs allow radiologists and surgeons to create 3-D images to look at specific areas from many different angles.

EXCITING ADVANCES

Albert Martinez, M.D., head radiologist at KMC, calls the new CT technology, “one of the most exciting things that’s happened in medicine in the past year.”

To learn more about radiology, CT, MRI, ultrasound or other diagnostics, call KMC at (208) 666-2855 or visit www.northidahomri.com.



KMC boasts two 16-slice CT scanners. The result is a thinner slice, or picture, and greater detail. With the help of a super computer, KMC has the ability to produce 3-D images that can be viewed from any angle. And it all happens with much greater speed.

During an MRI, a computer gathers volumes of data from many angles, but the images are taken with powerful magnets instead of radiation. “The newest MRI machines give us sharper images much faster,” Martinez says. “They give us the ability to look at areas we previously weren’t able to see. For example, with the new machine we can perform angiograms better than before—all the way from the belly down to the toes. We can take MRIs of the breast, which is helpful as an adjunct to mammography. We can do more than anybody else and probably more quickly—that’s the benefit of working with state-of-the-art equipment.”

Nowhere is this technology more critical than in KMC’s emergency department. “If you came through



Keith Hewel, M.D., KMC radiologist, reviews images from the latest in CT technology.

our hospital as a result of a motor vehicle accident, the level of care you would receive today would far exceed what you would have received in the past,” says Scott Venera, KMC director of radiology. “Today, we can take care of all your imaging needs in a matter of minutes, compared to upwards of an hour in the past. And in trauma, time is of the essence.”

BRINGING TECHNOLOGY HOME

Although the MRIs were housed temporarily in other hospitals, both machines will be permanently located at KMC beginning in April. The hospital is completing a \$54 million expansion for its Heart Center, and the MRI machines will be flagships of a new imaging center that also offers ultrasound, nuclear imaging, X-rays, biopsies, angiograms, bone density tests and more.

“Residents of North Idaho now have access to imaging services in their own community that are on par with any university hospital,” Martinez says. “There is no need to go looking for better technology—we have the best equipment available on the market right here.” ■