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Every year, more than 500,000 women in Sweden undergo mammography tests. Swedish studies into the favorable effects of mammography as part of routine medical examinations have shown that the mortality rate from breast cancer can be reduced 25-30% through early detection. Special efforts are also focused today on new methods to reduce radiation doses.

New mammography method reduces radiation dose five-fold

Sectra, the Swedish IT and medical technology company, will introduce a mammography system based on a completely new digital technology. The system will achieve the same high image quality as today's film-based systems – with radiation doses that are five times lower. Clinical tests are planned at hospitals in Sweden, and the new mammography system is expected to reach the Swedish market in the beginning of year 2002.

“It is extremely important to use minimal radiation doses in mammography screening, since a large number of healthy women are examined,” says Chief Senior Physician Ingvar Andersson, a medical expert at Sweden's National Social Welfare Board. “Early detection of breast cancer through mammography screening can reduce breast cancer mortality, but it is also important to optimize test methods in terms of image quality and radiation exposure.”

Effectiveness of new technology compared with present methods

Even the most dose-efficient film-based systems require high radiation exposures to ensure the image quality required to interpret mammographic images. Mamea Imaging AB, a company owned jointly by Sectra and several researchers at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, has developed a new technology that was originally created by a group of researchers working with particle physics at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland. Using a new type of sensor, about 95% of X-rays can now be used and virtually all interference is reduced. As a result, only about one-fifth of the traditional radiation dose is used to achieve the same high image quality as with film processing methods.

Additional benefits of digital mammography

Sectra's new system makes it possible to use digital mammography instead of traditional film processing by replacing film with digital images that can be studied and processed in computers. Other digital mammography systems are available on the market today, but they require radiation doses up to 10 times to achieve equivalent image quality to the Sectra system. As a result, digital mammography has not been considered practical in the Swedish market.

Opportunities to use digital mammography also offers other benefits, such as a reduction in the number of women who are required to take additional tests to provide physicians with supplementary imaging. With the digital mammography system, image quality is checked immediately after exposure, as opposed to traditional film processing, whereby most patients have left the hospital before the images are available. The new method also helps reduce unnecessary administrative work routines and inconvenience for the patients.

Another important advantage of digital mammography systems is the ability to rapidly transfer images to the best expert available. The new system will help offset this shortage by providing transmissions of digital images for examination at facilities where mammography test physicians are available – which should create opportunities for significant savings in sparsely populated areas. Health authorities in some Swedish counties today are unable to offer women adequate mammography testing, in terms of preferred medical standards, due to a shortage of physicians.

“Women in almost all countries in the western world are afforded opportunities to participate in some form of mammography programs, with X-ray examinations as the world's most common test method. As a result, we see very significant potential in mammography screening,” says Torbjörn Kronander, President of Sectra Imtec.

Sectra will present the new method at RSNA 2000, the world's largest Radiology trade fair, which will be held in Chicago during the period November 26-December 1, 2000.



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Welcome to visit our website <http://www.sectra.com>

Sectra's operations

Sectra has its roots in Linköping Technical University and is one of Sweden's fastest growing high-tech companies in the IT area. Since the mid-1980s, Sectra has successfully conducted development and sales of high-technology medical IT and telecommunications products. Today, the business includes products in medical imaging systems, secure communication systems and wireless information systems. Sectra's medical image business is conducted in Sectra Imtec AB, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sectra AB.

Jointly with a number of researchers at the Royal Institute of Technology, Sectra owns the company Mamea Imaging AB, that is developing the fundamental technology for a new-generation mammography system. All sales of Mamea's products are exclusively through Sectra.

Business is conducted in six countries with a total of 170 employees. Sales for the fiscal year May 1999–April 2000 reached SEK 192 million. Since March 1999, Sectra's shares have been quoted on the O list of the OM Stockholm Exchange.

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