

# M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS



## Salem Radiology

Robert C. Hannon, MD (2nd from left) with Brenda Lockwood, Practice Administrator (left) and Ann Marie Edwards and Terrence Licciardi, both RPA's

# Salem Radiology

## An In-Depth Look at One of the Region's Top Radiology Practices, Serving Both New Hampshire and Massachusetts Patients

By Margo W. R. Steiner

Over 30 years after its founding, Salem Radiology remains the standard bearer in southern New Hampshire and northeastern Massachusetts when it comes to high-end diagnostics, exceptional care and state-of-the-art equipment.

When Drs. Robert Hannon and Robert Schall founded Salem Radiology in 1976, their intent was to provide first-class diagnostic services to patients and physicians in what was at that time the somewhat underserved area of southern New Hampshire and the Merrimack Valley region of northeastern Massachusetts. With the invaluable contributions of a growing team of radiologist partners and employees over the past three decades, the company has

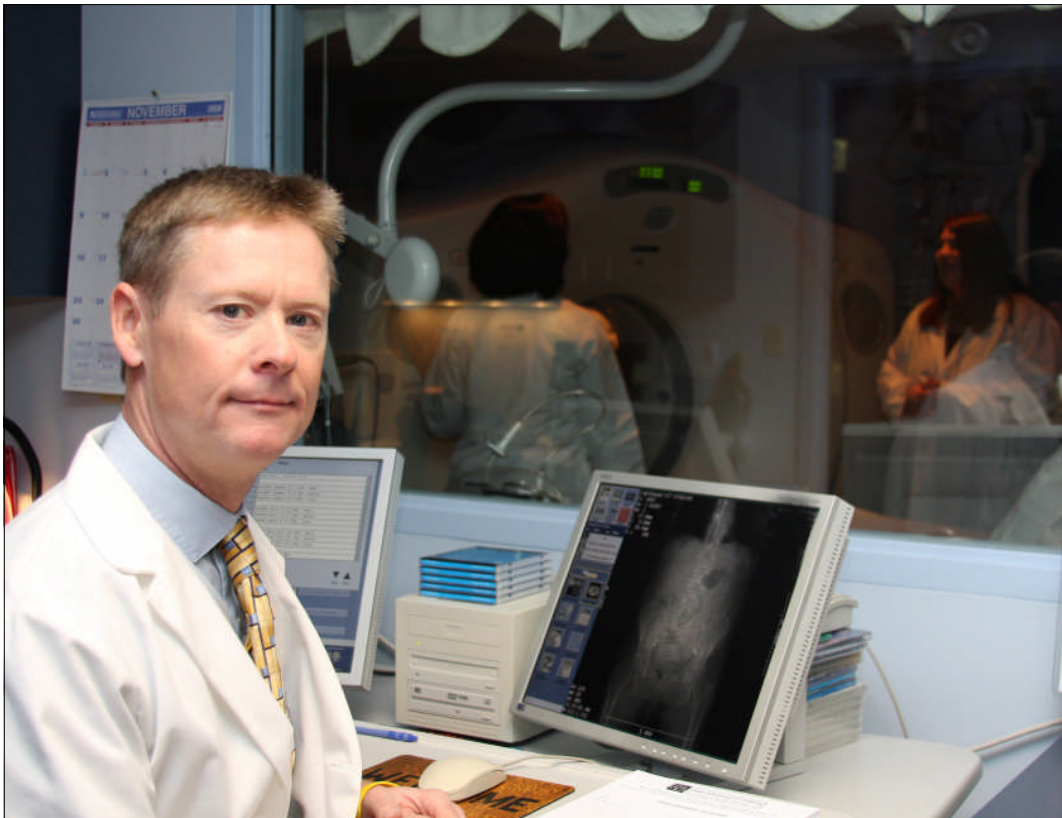
grown into the “go-to” source for an ever-widening geographic sphere of physicians and patients seeking answers to medical problems.

Salem Radiology presently has eight radiologists and over 80 employees. Through the real estate development efforts of a sister company over the years, Salem Radiology's Stiles Road address now sits in the middle of a 100,000<sup>+</sup>-square-foot outpatient medical community that houses physicians and health providers representing a wide variety of disciplines. Its radiologists staff the flagship office in Salem, two satellite offices (North Andover and Methuen), Merrimack Valley MRI (Methuen and Salem), and

New England PET Imaging (Methuen). The company also provides teleradiology (remote) reading services for a fast-growing list of both local and not-so-local physicians and other imaging providers.

In discussing the practice's longevity—and that of its staff, some of whom have been with the doctors for over 20 years—Dr. Hannon cites two important factors: the best technology and the most qualified staff to operate it. “We have always prided ourselves on having both exceptional equipment and exceptionally qualified and credentialed staff,” he notes, “and we continue to make significant investments in both.

“We were the first entity in the Merrimack Valley (in 2004) to acquire digital mammography and the computer-aided detection system (CAD) that facilitates breast cancer diagnoses,” he explains, “well in



**Joseph Reagan, RT (R)(CT) at the console of Salem Advanced CT's 64-slice Scanner**

*Photo by Danyelle DeLucia*

advance of some of the hospitals, which for some reason didn't see it as the technology of the future." Salem Radiology was similarly ahead of the competition in 2006 with its installation of 64-Slice CT at its Salem location under the brand name Salem Advanced CT Imaging (SACT). Through its partnership with Merrimack Valley MRI, it plans to continue this trend with the installation of a 3.0T MRI, which will be up and running in Methuen by the time of this article's publication.

"State-of-the-art technology is crucial, but it doesn't do much for you unless you have extremely qualified people running it," explains Dr. James R. Johnston, a radiologist and partner in the business. It's this combination that distinguishes the quality of Salem Radiology's services from that of other imaging providers. "Salem Radiology," continues Dr. Johnston, "was one of the first practices in the country, for example, to employ Radiology Practitioner Assistants (RPAs), basically 'super tech' extenders for the radiologists (The company paid for their 3 RPAs' two-year training programs.). Our RPAs," he says, "along with the rest of our highly trained technologists, are absolutely critical to the level of service we are trying to achieve. The difference is reflected not only in the quality and precision of our images, but also in our ability to provide physicians the answers they need to help their patients."

Those physicians readily agree. Neurosurgeon Dr. Peter Grillo calls Salem Radiology "a tremendous resource, both for me and the community. They don't just read films," he explains, "they help me—and others like me—solve real problems. They never give me just a 'possible' answer; they work with me, consult old x-rays and other studies in their files and together we arrive at a definitive answer."

I ask Michael Hannon, Dr. Hannon's son and the company's CFO, to elaborate on some of Salem Radiology's more advanced equipment and he's quick to highlight Salem Advanced CT Imaging's 64-slice CT scanner, one of the most advanced in commercial use today. "When we acquired it in 2006," he explains, "we were the first in the region with the technology. At the time, these scanners cost upwards of \$2 million. We used to tell people," he laughs, "that we were either way ahead of our time or completely out of our minds!" In hindsight, Hannon says, it was probably a combination; fortunately for patients and physicians in the region, the decision was the right one. "The clinical results," he notes, "have been spectacular."

While Michael is quick to point out that the more traditional outpatient CT exams are "how we pay the bills," he adds that there is something very rewarding about being able to offer the



In one of Salem's ultrasound and biopsy suites (l to r), Debra Rufiange, RDMS; Robert C. Hannon, MD and Laurie Page, RDMS.

*Photo by Danyelle DeLucia*

community the most advanced imaging services available in the world today from their humble New Hampshire barn-style home just off I-93's Exit 2.

One of those state-of-the-art services is called Cardiac CT Angiography (CCTA), or Cardiac CT. Those affiliated with the practice agree that their revolutionary work in CCTA has helped them continue to retain their position at the forefront of the medical imaging business.

For someone used to looking at the arteries of the heart via catheterization, the 64-slice CT scanner is "the sun, the moon and the stars," agrees Dr. Anthony Marino, a Methuen-based cardiologist who works closely with Salem Radiology on their CCTA service. "What you do clinically depends on what you see and the 64-slice gives an entirely different view. It's completely worthless, though, if you're not able to read it properly." This is where Salem Radiology's experience and expertise make the difference. "Together," Dr. Marino explains, "we're seeing things we've never seen before and it's even enabling us to predict future problems. Together, we've saved a lot of people. My practice has lit-

erally been transformed through my collaboration with Salem Radiology."

While some physicians and insurance companies have been slow to embrace this new technology, Salem Radiology believes it's just a matter of time. "Based on what I've seen and been told by our clinical team every day for almost three years now, there's no disputing the value of CCTA in the diagnosis and management of cardiovascular disease, particularly given the cost, which can be 90-percent less than more traditional invasive exams," says Michael. "Perhaps more compelling, however, is the fact that having a CCTA exam can literally mean the difference between a long life and imminent death."

Drs. Hannon and Marino cite the case of Steve Pittman. "A 57-year-old in superb condition," Dr. Hannon relates, "Steve experienced an unusual (for him) shortness of breath and a sense of 'just not feeling right' following a hike in the White Mountains last spring. When it persisted, he visited a pulmonary physician who ordered traditional pulmonary function studies and cardiac stress tests."



Mel Srinivasan, MD (seated) with Peter Messina, RPA review a 3D CT image.

Steve Pittman takes over his own story. “Because I was in great shape, having climbed a portion of Kilimanjaro and a number of lesser peaks, my tests read normal and the doctor sent me home with medication. A week later, I still wasn’t feeling well and went to the emergency room, where they gave me a nebulizer.”

A traditional CT scan and a second pulmonary function test again failed to find a problem and he was cleared to go ahead with a planned hike out west. “I wasn’t able to keep up with my wife,” he remembers, “and when we got home she mentioned my health problems to some of her colleagues at work. That’s when one mentioned her friend, Ann Marie Edwards, a Radiology Practitioner Assistant at Salem Advanced CT, and suggested I get a referral.” When his personal physician, who didn’t believe in the cardiac CT exam, refused to order the test, Pittman made arrangements for it himself.

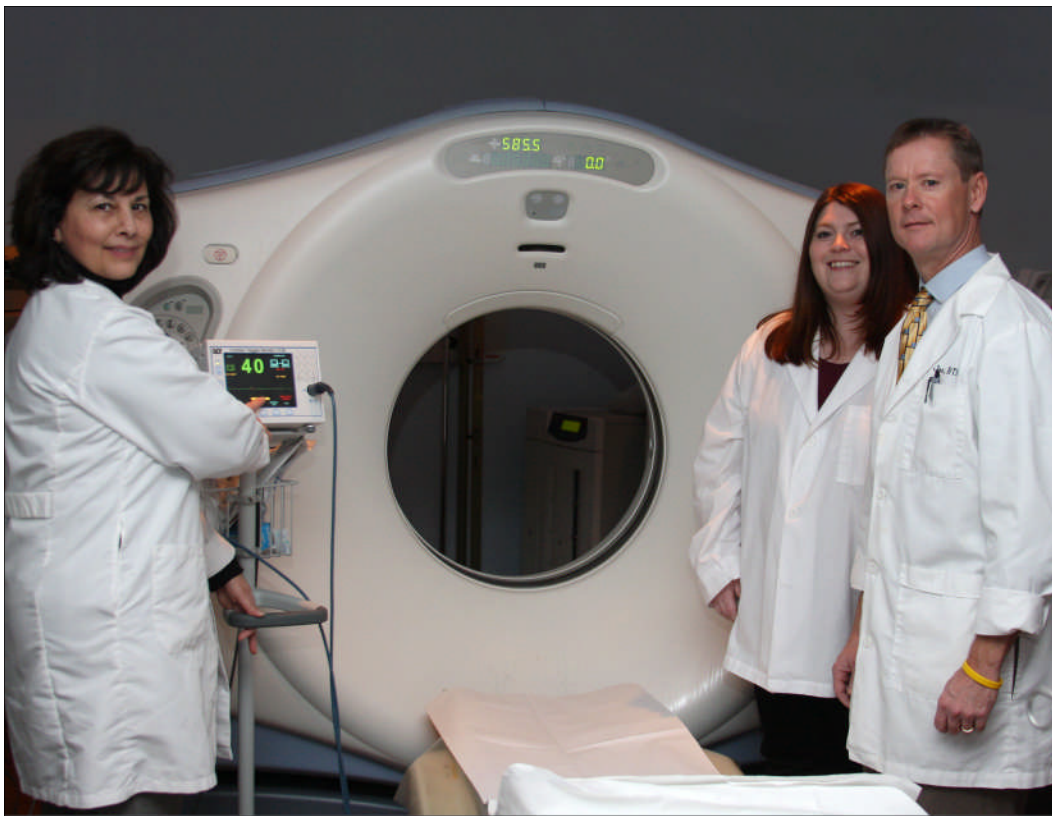
“It literally saved my life,” he says now of the machine. “Where other scanners saw nothing amiss, the equipment at SACT—and the skilled individuals who operate it—did. I knew I might be in trouble when I caught a brief ‘uh-oh’ look passing between them.”

Pittman’s exam, Dr. Hannon explains, showed diffuse coronary artery disease with 90-percent stenosis in the left anterior descending artery. Dr. Marino reviewed the study and agreed with the findings. Pittman subsequently underwent angioplasty with stent insertion, thwarting the heart attack that most likely would have occurred in the very near future.

Cardiologists refer to Steve Pittman’s condition as “the widow maker.” Steve Pittman calls what transpired at Salem Radiology “nothing short of a miracle.” The moral of Pittman’s story is simple: It often takes a more specialized, higher-end diagnostic exam to isolate and identify problems that lower-level scanners might miss. Since acquiring its 64-slice scanner, Salem Radiology has

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**Steve Pittman**  
**Salem Radiology patient**



**Ann Marie Edwards, RPA, Paulette Carrien, RT (R)(M)(CT) and Joseph Reagan, RT (R)(CT) in front of Salem Radiology’s 64 slice GE CT Scanner.**

*Photo by Danyelle DeLucia*

performed over 900 CCTA exams, in the process becoming the leading provider in the region.

While CT remains a major initiative for Salem Radiology, the company continues to push the envelope in all aspects of outpatient imaging. Last summer, for example, the company—in response to both a growing need and the practice’s longstanding commitment in particular to women’s health—opened a brand new, 2,000-square-foot interventional suite in Salem. The practice is now able to provide breast biopsies, thyroid biopsies, cyst aspirations, and drainages as part of its overall women’s health and imaging service [and in addition, a host of other interventional procedures including organ biopsies, PICC line insertions and para-and thoracentesis procedures].

The company isn’t stopping there, however. Beginning late last fall, Salem Radiology began implementing what it hopes will emerge as a full-service comprehensive **Breast Clinic**; one capable of offering women everything from screening mammograms to ultrasound to biopsy—as well as a consult with a breast surgeon—all under one roof and, if desired, on the same day. Says Beverly DuBois, the practice’s manager of women’s health and imaging, “We believe the ability to offer women a place to turn for answers and for direction in the event they find a lump or have an abnormal mammogram needs to be the gold

standard in women's imaging." The timing of Salem Radiology's expanded Breast Health services will dovetail with Merrimack Valley MRI's installation of 3.0T, which is state of the art for breast MRI.

Dr. Hannon credits Dr. Paula Muto, a Lawrence-based surgeon, as a driving force behind the Breast Clinic concept; one which has elicited great interest from other surgeons and doctors who wish to become involved. Salem Radiology believes this is a classic win-win for all involved. The surgeons gain access to a patient population they may not otherwise have an opportunity

to serve and Salem Radiology is in a ready position to perform any and all imaging, including biopsies. The real winners, everyone concedes, are the patients and their doctors who will now have a one-stop shop for all their breast health needs.

While Salem Radiology is extremely busy with its current practice, it is also well positioned to pursue what it believes will be significant growth opportunities.

As a result, Dr. Hannon is increasingly spending time cultivating new relationships. "Our long association with Caritas Holy Family Hospital ended not long ago, allowing us to become a free agent like Manny," he laughs. "It's something we see as a great opportunity." With a reputation earned through 32 years as the region's premier imaging provider, Salem Radiology is doing more and more readings for hospitals and doctors both in- and outside the local area via the emerging technology known as teleradiology.

Dr. Hannon provides an example. "We've been reading CT scans for various ENT groups and for other group practices for some time now," he says, "and are currently pursuing similar service arrangements with geographically-distant clinics, practices and government entities." For the first time, at November's annual radiology conference in Chicago, Salem Radiology's primary focus was on acquiring teleradiology contracts and infrastructure equipment rather than investing in new scanning equipment.

"It's obviously great to be able to provide the latest technologies and services to the communities we serve locally," says Brian Hannon, the company's IT and PACS director, "but there's no question that teleradiology already does—and will continue to—play a dramatic and ever-increasing role in the future of the imaging business. Our goal is to be at the forefront of that aspect of the business as well."

Why choose Salem Radiology? Dr. Hannon has a ready answer. "We invest in the best equipment on the market, see that our staff have the highest level of training and work cooperatively with physicians—both regionally and from afar—to interpret medical images with a highly sophisticated level of precision. This allows us to provide our customers with the product they ultimately want ... answers."

*Salem Radiology is headquartered at Salem Professional Park East, 23 Stiles Road, Salem, NH 03079. Dr. Robert Hannon ([rhannon@salemradnh.com](mailto:rhannon@salemradnh.com)) can be reached at 603.893.4352. Further information on the practice can be found at [www.salemradnh.com](http://www.salemradnh.com) and [www.salemadvct.com](http://www.salemadvct.com)*



**A GE Digital Mammography unit provides the background for Brenda Joaquim RT(R)(M) and Office Manager Beverly DuBois RT(R)(M) on right.**

*Photo by Danyelle DeLucia*