

January 2007 – High-field Open MRI Introduced in Loudoun County

With the recent opening of Radiology Imaging Associate's third Loudoun location, residents no longer have to travel outside of the county to take advantage of the benefits of state-of-the-art Open magnetic resonance imaging.

The Open MRI machine at the new 12,000 square-foot imaging center at Lansdowne Office Park is one of the first units of this type in the United States, according to Dr. Joseph Finizio, president and CEO of the company. "We put it in because this is a high-field strength magnet. Basically, magnets come in various strengths; the lower the strength, the less optimal the image is. That is one of the reasons why we would not install an open magnet in the practice until this particular product became available. It is the strongest open magnet on the market right now," he said.

The device is particularly useful for patients who would be uncomfortable in a traditional enclosed MRI, such as those who have weight issues or are claustrophobic. Families also benefit from the availability of the new system, since parents can go into the room with a child. "It's just much more patient-friendly," Finizio said.

Obtaining the device required getting the approval from state regulators, as well as the local medical community. "We have had the doctors wanting outpatient services in the Lansdowne area," where the majority of the county's physicians practice, said Finizio, a former chairman of radiology at the hospital. "The doctors wanted a convenient service area and facility."

Along with the Open MRI, the latest in medical equipment is used at the Lansdowne center. Finizio plans to integrate another MRI at the practice's other Lansdowne location, next to the hospital, sometime in the future. Besides the separate MRI suite, the spacious office contains an ultrasound suite, CAT scanner, and a separate women's center with digital mammography.

"The last thing [female patients who may be worried about breast cancer and other serious illnesses] want is to be in a general area where children are jumping up and down, or things of that nature. I think having women separated is very reasonable, and I think it's very compassionate," Finizio said.

Space at the center is also available for conferences, meetings, and training. Well designed and easily accessed from the interior and exterior of the building, the office offers patients a calm, soothing environment. "This is a product of many years of us learning what would make the best office configuration," Finizio said.

Those years of experience come from operating the practice's other locations including the Sterling office, where a comprehensive array of diagnostic imaging services, including nuclear medicine, is offered.

Besides featuring new equipment, the Sterling center also recently launched a noninvasive cardiac program that can perform new tests for coronary artery disease more safely and for thousands of dollars less than traditional exams. “We are so excited because cardiac CT is becoming more and more understood. It’s going to become a very powerful tool.” Finizio said. “You can really get definitive information from essentially one breath-hold.”