

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

Media contact: Heather Stieglitz

(214) 648-3404

or e-mail: heather.stieglitz@email.swmed.edu

MAMMOGRAPHY EXPERT JOINS UT SOUTHWESTERN'S CENTER FOR BREAST CARE

DALLAS — Everyone likes good news, and Dr. Ward Parsons, the new medical director of breast imaging at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas' Center for Breast Care, loves giving it.

"I'm privileged to be able to give enough good news that it offsets the less pleasant reports that I have to communicate to people," said Parsons, a nationally known breast-imaging expert who joined the UT Southwestern faculty as an associate professor of radiology in July. "Most of my patients do not have breast cancer. Telling them they are normal gives me a great deal of satisfaction."

Parsons moved to Dallas from the Susan G. Komen Breast Center in Peoria, Ill.

Parsons believes a multidisciplinary approach and team effort lead to better patient care. He will be working side-by-side with the other breast-center physicians at UT Southwestern, seeing patients together and making treatment decisions together.

Dr. George Peters, executive director of the Southwestern Center for Breast Care, is excited about Parsons' arrival at UT Southwestern.

"Dr. Parsons brings an expertise that will allow us to further integrate new diagnostic approaches," Peters said. "What he has is quality, experience, innovation and an enthusiasm I have rarely seen."

Parsons said his role as a breast-imaging radiologist differs from that of the traditional radiologist.

"I talk with patients, examine them, hold their hands, commiserate with them," said the affable physician. "It is a primary-care encounter where I am often the first person to see the patient, and the person who must explain that we have detected an abnormality."

Attuned to his patients, who often come in anxious and tense, Parsons uses what he calls verbal anesthesia to make them comfortable.

"Permission to stop or interrupt a procedure is one of the most effective anesthetic agents,

(MORE)

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because then the patients know the procedure is under their control," Parsons said. "And because their apprehension has been lessened, they practically never ask me to stop."

Parsons believes that every encounter with a patient is an opportunity to teach and an opportunity to learn. He plans to impart this message to residents, fellows and medical students along with his technical knowledge of breast imaging.

Parsons' ease and comfort dealing with patients comes from many years of experience. He not only has a medical degree, but also a degree as a radiological technologist. The latter he received before he even finished his undergraduate education. After one year at Louisiana State University (LSU), Parsons was undecided on a career. He went home to Mobile, Ala., where his family had moved, and there entered the Providence Hospital School of X-ray Technology. It was a perfect fit; Parsons found his direction. After receiving his radiological technologist degree, he went back to LSU, along with his bride Genette, to finish his undergraduate education and to obtain his medical degree.

It was during his residency at the Bethesda Naval Hospital that he got his introduction to breast imaging-at a time when the openness of First Lady Betty Ford, who was treated at Bethesda, increased public awareness of breast cancer.

Once finished with his military obligation, Parsons joined the radiology group at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis, where he practiced for 12 years. During his last four years as chief of mammography, the breast-care load increased from 500 to 5,000 patients yearly. From Memphis he moved to Peoria, and then to Dallas.

Parsons and Genette, his Southern-born wife, consider this latest move as a permanent vacation. "Genette likes being in a place where people don't have accents," he said facetiously. The couple has two adult children.

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