

Ultrasound imaging now available at Lopez Island Medical Clinic

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The SonixTOUCH, a state-of-the-art ultrasound machine, is now in use at Lopez Island Medical Clinic. It is quick, safe, and provides excellent images.

Staff at the Lopez Island Medical Clinic now have a new, start-of-the art tool at their disposal to help with diagnosis and treatment—ultrasound imaging. Based on the same principles involved in the sonar used by bats and ships, ultrasound imaging uses high-frequency sound waves to detect changes in appearance of organs, tissues, and vessels or to detect abnormal masses, such as tumors. Ultrasound exams don't use ionizing radiation (as used in x-rays), so there are no harmful effects. They're also non-invasive and usually painless, fast, and easy.

“We'll continue to rely on the diagnostic imaging services at Island Hospital,” says Clinic physician, Dr. Bob Wilson, “but having this tool at the Clinic improves our ability to evaluate and treat conditions and to assess trauma cases. It will help us determine if a patient can be treated here, needs a referral for more follow-up, or if there is an emergency condition that requires immediate transfer to a mainland facility.”

Nurse practitioner Cathy Doherty will use the new instrument for women's health care. Generally, it won't be used for echocardiogram, prenatal care, or breast ultrasound; those all require a level of skill and follow-up that the Clinic is not designed to provide.

The Clinic's SonixTouch ultrasound equipment consists of a console containing a computer and electronics, a video display screen, and a transducer that is used to scan the body and blood vessels. The ultrasound image is immediately visible on a screen that looks much like a computer or television monitor.

“The images can be printed and also can be burned onto a CD and sent to a specialist for further evaluation,” says Dr. Wilson. “Eventually, when fiber-optic technology is available here, we'll be able to send the images electronically for immediate review if we need consultation.”

Thanks to the generosity of two donors, the Catherine Washburn Memorial Association (CWMA) was able to purchase the ultrasound equipment to keep the Clinic up-to-date and ready to serve people just that much more efficiently. Opened in 1974, the Lopez Island Medical Clinic building is owned and maintained by the CWMA; staffing and fiscal operations are managed by contract with Island Hospital in Anacortes.