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MCHC radiologists Melissa Hunt (left) and Heather Simpson are excited about the hospital's upgrades to the x-ray technology.

Grant funding helps MCHC upgrade x-ray equipment

BY MICHELLE VAN HEE
 T-M EDITOR

First, they received a grant and installed a new CT Scanner, and now another grant has allowed Madelia Community Hospital & Clinic (MCHC) to upgrade their x-ray equipment.

"My dreams are all coming true; we are upgrading the entire department," stated Melissa Hunt, Director of Radiology.

MCHC received a \$50,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Health Office of Rural Health and Primary Care to upgrade their x-ray technology from CT (computer radiography) to DC, a digital format.

The images are now direct capture and take only an instant to show up. With the older technology, after capturing the x-ray image the technicians had to take a cassette, put it in a machine, and wait for the image to download, then go back and take whatever additional x-ray images they needed. That process took a bit of time and required a lot of waiting for the patient and back and forth for the radiologist.

Now, x-rays take half the amount of time and the radiation dose is much lower. Plus, the images are much more crisp and clear.

They also upgraded the portable x-ray machine to DC, which is awesome for many reasons, but especially in the emergency room. Hunt said that it really helps when intubating a patient. Before, the radiologist would have to leave the room to process an x-ray showing if the tube was placed correctly

and the doctor would have to wait to see the image. Now the doctor can view it right away, the radiologist does not have to leave the room and tubes can be adjusted accordingly if necessary. Then they can take additional x-rays immediately if needed.

"This vastly improves our patient care," Hunt said. "There are huge benefits from this technology. There again, a grant really helped us and is making a difference in people's lives."

MCHC also purchased a mammography unit for the new x-ray equipment. It has not arrived yet, but is coming soon, and will give the radiologists much better images on mammograms that are 3D in nature. It takes images of the breast in slices that allows the radiologist to better see what is normal and should detect more breast cancers. This type of image is also better for scanning dense breast tissue and may reduce callbacks for things that are not anything to be concerned about.

Hunt said that MCHC is very happy to receive grants. So many hospitals, especially in rural areas, are facing challenges with the rising costs of health care and when it comes to helping uninsured or under-insured patients. Hunt believes that every patient they see deserves the best care possible and should be treated the same.

"We have to be more efficient and try to get grants for necessary upgrades and keep our status in good standing," Hunt said. She feels really blessed and that MCHC offers outstanding care and is fiscally responsible.