Boone Memorial Hospital's Radiology Department reached record high patient numbers in April 2012 with their new MRI on-site unit. Rather than using a mobile unit, BMH, Inc now has an on-site unit.

"We saw the need because our patients told us that driving to Charleston is expensive. All of this was in the best interest of our patients and we felt it was important to respond to the community needs. It is all about patient care at home at BMH, Inc.," **explained Tommy Mullins, BMH Administrator.**

Mark Linville, Executive Director of General Services at BMH, Inc. shared why he feels the numbers have increased.

"The significance is that we are saving patients time and money from having to go to Charleston or other areas to get their MRI's. I believe that the numbers have increased because providers value having this tool at their disposal and know we have competent Radiologists reading the studies. Also, we have reduced cost in operating the MRI here on campus versus having a mobile unit coming in. We can operate this unit more efficient that mobile units."

The MRI unit has been on-site for several months and has already been put to great use.

"We have been booked up and saw over 30 patients in just the first couple of weeks," **said Greg Zornes, Director of Radiology at Boone Memorial Hospital.** ***"We set a record in April and continue to increase patient volume. It is always nice when a new or improved service reaches more patients. I believe our MRI numbers are increasing because patients and providers in the area now know that we offer MRI service five-days-a-week instead of the 1-day a week that we previously offered. Having a fixed unit makes things easier and more convenient for the patient and decreases wait time as well,"***

Zornes added.

"We are the first Critical Access Hospital in the State of West Virginia to offer a fixed unit," **explained Mullins.**

"We are very happy to offer this service to the local community. I know so many people are already benefiting from the ease and comfort of having a fixed MRI unit located so close to home. We also offer free parking," **Mullins added.**

All of the radiology exams at Boone Memorial Hospital are interpreted by Premier Imaging, a group of radiologists based in the Charleston area. Most all radiology exams are reported within 24 hours. A patient can get an appointment for an MRI or most any other imaging exam at BMH within 24-48 hours.

So, what exactly is an MRI of the body and what can you expect? The MRI unit at BMH is a 1.5 Tesla Seimens Symphony, closed bore system, which offers superior image quality. It is housed in a mobile technology trailer that is conveniently located near the hospital's main entrance. MRI uses magnetic energy and radio waves to create images. There is no radiation involved in having an MRI examination. The magnetic energy used in MRI is not safe for all patients. Anyone with a cardiac pacemaker should avoid having an MRI examination. The technologists carefully screen every patient for possible contraindications before an MRI.

MRI is capable of showing soft tissue structures in great detail. It is very useful for evaluating ligament and tendon damage, as well as the soft tissues of the brain and spinal cord. The images can then be examined on a computer monitor, transmitted electronically, printed or copied to a CD. MRI does not use ionizing radiation (x-rays).

Detailed MR images allow physicians to better evaluate various parts of the body and determine the presence of certain diseases that may not be assessed adequately with other imaging methods such as x-ray, ultrasound, or computed technology (also called CT scanning).

MR imaging of the body is performed to evaluate a number of things such as organs of the abdomen-including the liver, biliary tract, kidneys, spleen, pancreas, and adrenal glands. It also evaluates pelvic organs, blood vessels (MR Angiography), and breasts.

"At BMH we mainly see patients who suffer from joint, back or neck pain. We also treat a lot of people who have experienced some sort of injury," **said Zornes.**

For some patients, hearing those 3 letters - 'MRI' - can result in anxiety. However, most MRI exams are painless. Although some patients do find it uncomfortable to remain still during MR imaging while others experience a sense of being closed-in (claustrophobia).

"Our patients are usually alone in the exam room during the MRI procedure. However, our technologists will be able to see, hear and speak with them at all times using a two-way intercom; the patient also has a panic ball which can be squeezed to immediately terminate the exam. There are currently two technologists who have been approved by the State of WV to perform the MRI at BMH; Toni Williams and myself," **explained Zornes.**

"Radiologist Joe Skeens, M.D., a well respected physician specifically trained to supervise and interpret radiology examinations, will analyze the images and send a signed report to the patient's referring physician, who will share the results with them. They can expect results in less than 24 hours. Our staff is very friendly and makes everyone feel at ease here," **said Zornes.**

At Boone Memorial Hospital it's all about patient needs and satisfaction explained Linville.

"Again, the service is for the patients. Anything we can do to make their healthcare needs more affordable, more accessible and more comfortable, that is our goal. We feel our patients deserve the best healthcare that we can give them," **he concluded.**

To schedule an appointment or to receive more information about the MRI unit, please contact the Boone Memorial Hospital Radiology Department at 304-369-8805.

In regard to scheduling: In most cases, the referring physician's office staff will check on the patient's insurance requirements and schedule the appointment. Please call the BMH Radiology Department for more details.

***Information provided by: RadiologyInfo.org and Boone Memorial Hospital**