



From left, radiation oncologist Ajay Bhatnagar, M.D., surgeon Ramon Mourelo, M.D., and surgeon Joyce Bonenberger, M.D., are shown Sept. 30 conducting the first Intra-Operative Radiation Therapy procedure in the state of Arizona at Casa Grande Regional Medical Center.

# State's first breakthrough breast cancer treatment performed in Casa Grande

## Staff Reports

Casa Grande Regional Medical Center and Cancer Treatment Services Arizona were the first in the state of Arizona to perform a new breakthrough treatment Sept. 30 for early stage breast cancer.

In two different procedures that day, surgeons Joyce Bonenberger, M.D., and Ramon Mourelo, M.D., each performed a surgical removal of a breast tumor. This procedure was immediately followed by a therapeutic dose of radiation while the patient was still in the operating room by radiation oncologist Ajay Bhatnagar, M.D., from CTSA. Following the radiation treatment, the surgery was completed.

Dr. Bhatnagar explains, "By delivering the radiation at the time of surgery, these patients will only receive this single dose of radiation to treat their breast

cancer, greatly reducing treatment and recovery time."

When asked about the benefits of this new procedure, called Intra-Operative Radiation Therapy, Dr. Bonenberger said, "Typically, for women diagnosed with early stage breast cancer, breast cancer treatment can take as little as one week or as long as seven weeks to complete. This new treatment may especially benefit patients who do not live in close proximity to a cancer treatment facility since it is completed in one day."

The dose of radiation is delivered during the course of surgery with CTSA's Xofig Brachytherapy System, a treatment machine that is easily transported from CTSA to CGRMC due to its portability and minimal shielding requirements. The entire treatment takes place in one location during the course of a two-hour surgical

procedure, so patients do not have to undergo daily outpatient radiation therapy in the following weeks.

"This is an amazing development in early stage breast cancer treatment and should revolutionize recovery time for our patients," Dr. Mourelo added. "I am proud that our community is taking the lead in this new procedure."

CGRMC and CTSA are among 10 centers, and the only one in Arizona, piloting this new treatment. Candidates for the procedure must be women at least 45 years of age with a breast tumor less than 3 centimeters in diameter that has not spread beyond the breast tissue. The study will assess cancer recurrence, serious adverse events and cosmetic results following Intra-Operative Radiation Therapy.