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## New system can help with early lung disease diagnoses

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By SCOT ALLYN

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**LORAIN** — A new high-tech procedure being used at Community Regional Medical Center finds diseased areas of lungs at a much earlier stage of development than previously possible.

Dr. Alexander Zolli, a surgeon, and assistants Vickie Turner and Dawn Church, demonstrated yesterday how the computer-navigated tools discovered a tumor smaller than a peanut in a patient's lung two weeks ago.

Known as electromagnetic navigation bronchoscopy, Zolli snakes a flexible bronchoscope down a patient's windpipe and into the lung as his team follows its progress on a computer monitor and prepares to offer the filament-thin tools used to gather cells from questionable areas.

Community Regional Medical Center spent about \$150,000 for the equipment and training Zolli, Turner and Church in its use, according to Jennifer Kennedy, a hospital spokesperson. SuperDimension Ltd., founded in Israel but now based in Minneapolis, Minn., made the system, currently available in only four hospitals in Ohio.

Two weeks ago, Zolli and his team removed cells from the tumor they found and learned the very same day they were cancerous.

"Before now, we were not able to do this," he said. "Traditionally, we would have seen something tiny on a chest X-ray or CT scan and tell the patient to come back in four to six months for another look. It caused a lot of anxiety for the patient, not knowing if they had cancer or not."

Thanks to the early detection, Zolli's patient is undergoing chemotherapy and has a good chance to survive, he said.

"Without this, she'd still be waiting months for the second scan," he said. "The procedure is minimally invasive and requires no surgical cutting, making it safer for less robust patients who cannot handle a larger biopsy-type operation."

The procedure can also be used to place solid-gold markers around a diseased area, allowing radiation therapy to be directed only at cancer cells, reducing the damage to healthy tissue.

"The lung is like a big sponge," Zolli said. "It's the last frontier for this type of procedure. Using it, we are looking forward to helping 50 to 100 more patients a year."

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