

# Halifax firm Densitas out to improve breast cancer screening

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A Halifax medical technology firm is poised to sell its first commercial product and announced free access to another for breast cancer researchers.

The team from **Densitas Inc.** is making its way home from the European Congress of Radiology in Vienna, where the company profiled Densitas Research Edition, used to offer precise and consistent measurement of breast density from images taken during mammograms.

“(Researchers) don’t need any hardware or anything on hand,” Adele MacLean, company spokeswoman, said in an interview Tuesday.

“They just need to be able to access the web interface and upload their images, and it gives them a file that they can download that gives them all the breast density values that they need to do their research.”

Measuring density is key because cancer and dense breast tissue both appear white on a mammogram, and it’s within those areas that cancer can hide and grow, MacLean said.

Radiologists currently review and make a visual determination of density using images from a mammogram. This assessment is based on years of experience and training, but no two radiologists are assured of seeing the exact same thing and the possibility for error remains, MacLean said.

The new technology is “a significant improvement,” she said, as it generates the exact same result from the same image repeatedly.

“We switched from film mammography to digital mammography, that was a big advance. This is just one area of part of the process of reading images that has not evolved significantly for some time.”

Founded by CEO Mohamed Abdoell, a biostatistician and Dalhousie University professor, the tech startup was incorporated in 2011 and now employs 10 people, including programmers, engineers, scientists and business staff.

Abdoell was still in Europe on Tuesday.

Representatives of the firm had attended the European congress in previous years, MacLean said, but this was the first time the company got to showcase its technology both in the trade show and as part of research presented at the conference, which saw more than 20,000 visitors from more than 100 countries.

“It’s going to be a big year for us,” she said.

Densitas is also pursuing approval in Europe for its commercial product DM-Density, which it is beta testing with breast cancer researchers at the Capital district health authority. The company plans to apply to American and Canadian regulators to approve sale of the product, which uses the same technology as the research edition.

The company hopes to see commercial sales of DM-Density begin in Europe in the second quarter of this year, MacLean said.

With a potential global market worth about \$1 billion, the company has a number of other products in the works, she said.

“We’re on the edge to launch into commercial sales to a viable product. In the interim, we’ve introduced a technology that’s available now for researchers. We want to get it into their hands so we can ultimately make the best product that we can to help with the subsequent detection and treatment of breast cancer.”

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