



White Coat Notes

News from the Boston-area medical community

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Monday, March 26, 2007

Contrast agent may shed light on breast cancer diagnosis

Researchers at **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center** and **Harvard Medical School** are reporting preliminary success with a new way to screen for breast cancer that one day might supplement mammography, according to the **American Chemical Society**.



Crystals resembling those in human breast cancer.

Dr. John Frangioni and researchers in his lab have developed a way to make a contrast agent that after being injected into the bloodstream binds to a particular calcium salt called hydroxyapatite.

That salt is found in malignant micro-calcifications in the breast, but not in benign ones, according to an ACS statement. The contrast agents are designed to be used with optical tomography, an imaging method that sends near-infrared light through the body. Frangioni said it would likely be a few years before the compound is tested in human trials.

Kumar R. Bhushan, a postdoctoral fellow in Frangioni's lab, is scheduled to present the details today at the ACS meeting in Chicago.