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KODAK Professional Services
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Smooth Conversion to PACS

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IMAGE RADIOLOGY GROUP



Sean Gosai, vice president of Image Radiology Group and Imaging Options, Inc., recently selected Kodak's imaging project management services to handle installation of a Kodak DirectView PACS.

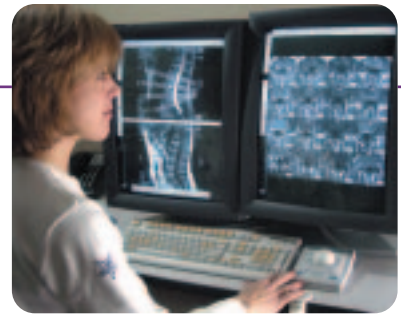
With five open MRI imaging centers in the greater Pittsburgh, PA, area, referrals from multiple physicians and growing patient volumes, Image Radiology Group wanted a more efficient workflow than they had with paper- and film-based systems in use at each site. Digital technologies, like those found in hospitals, could help the group achieve the operational efficiencies it desired but finding a vendor with the products and expertise to meet the unique needs of their imaging center operation was critical to success. They chose Kodak and, according to Sean Gosai, vice president of Image Radiology Group, the company has applied PACS (picture archiving and communication system) and RIS (radiology information system) technology with excellent results.

Healthscan USA is one of five locations Image Radiology Group has in the greater Pittsburgh, PA, area. Both staff and radiologists have experienced impressive productivity gains since installing a KODAK DIRECTVIEW PACS system.

"Independent imaging centers like ours are judged in part by our ability to provide efficient service. We were interested in PACS and RIS technology because we knew it would enable us to provide referring physicians with faster delivery of radiology reports and access to imaging studies," Gosai notes.

Image Radiology Group had two issues to be overcome before it could go forward with its digital strategy. First, the group decided it would rather lease the equipment than own it. That issue was solved when the radiology group that serves the facility, Imaging Options, Inc., purchased the equipment and leased it back to the imaging center company.

Radiologist Jennifer A. Bender, M.D., views images on a KODAK DIRECTVIEW DX diagnostic workstation. Radiologists report productivity gains of 15 percent since converting to softcopy reading.



The next issue involved installation, service/support and training. Image Radiology Group and Imaging Options needed a vendor that could design a network to serve all the imaging centers and a business office, install a RIS and then integrate the RIS with PACS for optimal digital workflows. It also needed the vendor to train both radiologists and technologists to use the new systems.

After evaluating several vendors carefully, Gosai selected Kodak because it offered a full range of services, from networking capability to project management installation, training and support, to complement its PACS. "Kodak had a competitive edge because it was able to provide us with a project manager who had extensive experience in networking and PACS issues. And Kodak's service and training personnel are known throughout the industry for their competency and responsiveness."

Gosai was also impressed with Kodak's new DIRECTVIEW PACS platform. "The system was affordable, fully featured, and the radiologists felt the diagnostic workstations offered several features that enhanced the efficiency of softcopy reading," he reports.

Les Weibley, Kodak's project manager, came to the site and studied workflows and requirements. Weibley handled all installation details for PACS—from selecting the location of diagnostic workstations, network drops and servers to determining the power sources and HVAC requirements and working with AT&T on the T1 installation. He also recommended and installed a WAN with a frame relay network of T1 lines instead of point-to-point connections to reduce expenses.

Weibley then developed an installation schedule and worked with the RIS vendor to achieve full integration with the PACS. He also coordinated training by Kodak applications consultants, including after-hours training for radiologists.

"This project, while not complex, did involve integration with RIS and providing a PACS that satisfies the needs of five imaging centers and a group of radiologists," Weibley notes.

One wrinkle that needed to be overcome was providing consistent display of information—despite the fact that the open MRI systems came from different vendors and handled information about the imaging study differently. Weibley created tag translation programs for the PACS to ensure that the image description is displayed consistently for radiologists.

After the network was installed, RIS was implemented and all the offices became connected to a scheduling system. Soon afterward, PACS went live and imaging studies conducted at all locations are available for reading on KODAK DIRECTVIEW DX diagnostic workstations. Images can also be accessed on KODAK DIRECTVIEW CX review workstations located throughout the network, including the corporate headquarters. After-hours reading is conducted at a single location. The system's archive is located at the main office and will store two years' worth of imaging studies.

BETTER SERVICE FOR REFERRING PHYSICIANS

Since implementing PACS, the group has achieved dramatic improvements in service. Routine reports that used to take 24 to 36 hours are now sent out in just 8 hours. STAT exams are handled in as little as 45 minutes.

"We could not have installed PACS at a better time," says Gosai. "Our imaging volumes have increased, and the efficiencies PACS provides equips us to provide better service with a small staff."

Image Radiology Group has also achieved impressive gains in staff productivity. "When we were working with film and paper, secretaries and other staff members spent hours filing exams, faxing reports and



John J. Nusida, RT(R)(CT), examines film of an MRI procedure that has been printed on a KODAK DRYVIEW™ 8700 laser imager. Soon referring physicians will have Web-based access to images.

performing other time-consuming clerical tasks. Now staff members can access reports and schedules electronically, which is much faster," Gosai notes.

Duplicate patient data entry is also eliminated. "We used to enter patient information several times. Now we access the information from the RIS to automatically generate reports, bills and labels. Patients also benefit because our check-in process is much faster and scheduling is more automated," he explains.

The radiologists have also benefited from the move to softcopy reading. In fact, radiologists are able to read at least 15 percent more exams per day on softcopy. "We have seen impressive gains in productivity due to keystroke access to images and workstation features like automatic 'hanging protocols' that display the images in the order each radiologist prefers," notes radiologist Shyam Gohel, M.D.

Gosai already knows what the future holds: upgrading the PACS with Web-based access to reports and images. "Currently we automatically fax the reports to all referring physicians and we send film studies in one out of every three cases. Web-based access would greatly enhance our service to orthopedic practices and others that need a convenient way to access and store imaging studies."

While PACS is traditionally thought of in the context of a hospital radiology environment, Image Radiology Group's experience proves that the advantages of digital imaging can pay off for smaller healthcare facilities like independent imaging centers.

"The impressive benefits of PACS can justify its installation," says Gosai. "However, when you are a small company like ours, retaining a vendor with project management expertise is equally important. I am extremely satisfied with the comprehensive installation and support services Kodak provided and would heartily recommend them to others."

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