If You Have Imaging Problems, the KODAK MIN-R Accreditation Advantage Program Has the Answers

Who do you call if you see artifacts on your mammograms? What about streaks or insufficient contrast? The KODAK MIN-R Accreditation Advantage Program is a lifeline for mammography departments and clinics across the country that must meet the toughest imaging standards in the radiology industry. This program helps facilities rapidly resolve any equipment-related quality control issues that degrade image quality—and could affect accreditation.

Kodak's Accreditation Advantage Program was founded to help imaging centers, clinics, and radiology departments prepare for ACR or state accreditation and MQSA inspections. This program is offered free of charge to facilities that use Kodak mammography film, chemistry, and processors.

The program helps busy facilities that need to resolve image quality issues quickly while maintaining full productivity—as well as small or remote facilities with few internal resources. Imaging consultant Roxanne Moran, RT (R)(M), heads the program. She answers questions, coordinates evaluation of images and processor charts, facilitates chemical analysis with teams of Kodak engineers, and then works with customers and distributors to implement a solution.

Infrequent processing, improper darkroom ventilation, or a malfunctioning spring on a processor squeegee roller are just some of the factors the Accreditation Advantage Program has identified and resolved.

FACILITY EXPERIENCES SUBTLE DENSITY CHANGES

McCall Memorial Hospital, a 15-bed hospital in McCall, Idaho, was experiencing subtle differences in densities in their mammographic images. McCall's director of radiology Bill Colpo, RT (R) RDMS, joined the Accreditation Advantage Program and sent in processor QC charts, flat-field images, and phantom images for Kodak's imaging consultant to evaluate.

The diagnosis? This small facility ran too few films through the processor to keep the developer and fixer active. The solution was to use a flood replenishment cycle in which starter chemicals are added to the developer to keep it active.

"Kodak's imaging consultant identified the problem in just a few days. Roxanne Moran not only communicated with our staff, she also coordinated with our distributor, who came on-site to make the processor adjustment," Colpo explains.

A patient receives counseling from Kathleen Russ-Baker, RT (R)(M), following a breast exam at Olean Medical Group in Olean, New York.

DETERMINING CAUSE OF ARTIFACTS

Olean Medical Group, an outpatient imaging facility in Olean, New York, recently contacted Kodak's Advantage Program to help determine the cause of artifacts that were appearing on its mammograms. After examining sample images, Kodak's imaging consultant determined that a spring on the squeegee roller needed to be replaced, the chemistry was being over-replenished, and the vent above the processor was causing dust artifacts.

Kathleen Russ-Baker, RT (R)(M), recently assumed responsibility for the facility's quality control after spending 15 years as a technologist. "I had experience with positioning patients and obtaining high-quality images, but no experience with quality control procedures. Kodak stepped in and helped us solve these image quality issues as we were getting ready for our ACR accreditation."

There are many conditions that can cause processing problems and ventilation is a common culprit. One Kodak customer had a vent with such strong airflow that it dragged fumes from the fixer across the developer and contaminated the chemistry. On the other hand, if ventilation systems are turned off while the area is not being used, heat from the processor as it cools can cause condensation, which can contaminate chemistry.

Problems can also arise from other sources. At one facility, an outside-opening door introduced carpet fibers that were causing artifacts on the film. At another site, fibers from a technologist's wool sweater were appearing on the film.

ACR ACCREDITATION TIMELINE

Normally, the ACR sends each mammography facility a letter approximately eight months before accreditation is due to expire. The facility then has six weeks to submit an entry application and the fee. Normally the full application is sent six to eight weeks later. Facilities have just 45 days from the date on that cover letter to submit the extensive application—which includes documenting continuing education credits for radiologists and technologists, and submitting QC charts, phantom images, and mammograms.

"Many facilities from around the country are calling Kodak's Advantage Program because they received the full ACR application earlier than usual and have very little time to pull all the information together," notes Moran.

"This application is very detailed, so we are answering a lot of questions from customers—some of whom are managing the accreditation process for the first time."

Moran adds that the Kodak program can help detect problems before they become serious. "Aside from outside comparison films, the only mammograms most technologists see are the ones produced at their own facilities. If there is a subtle ongoing problem, they are not likely to notice it. Our staff can detect these issues before they become obvious, and before they begin to degrade image quality."

If you have an imaging problem, Kodak Min-R's Accreditation Advantage Program has the answer. For more information about Kodak mammography products and the company's technical support programs, please visit the Web site at www.kodak.com/go/mammo, or call 1-800-328-2910, press option 2 and ask for Kodak's Accreditation Advantage Program.

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