

Medical Imaging

Tips for Managing Costs and Improving Patient Care through Health Analytics



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Hospital workflow systems have tremendous potential to drive change in today's challenging healthcare environment. Using insights from these systems, you can enhance the return on investment from your medical imaging equipment while delivering the best possible outcomes for patients. In addition, these insights can help you meet the operational needs of every hospital in your system—for example—by selecting appropriate Radiology Information Systems (RIS) and Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS) based on the procedures that a given hospital performs.

The lure of "better capability"

Too often, regional hospital systems purchase overly complex RIS/PACS equipment for their smaller community hospitals, with the rationale that having the capability to perform advanced procedures provides valuable flexibility and room for growth. In these cases, a workflow analysis would provide a convincing argument to apply the funds in a more effective way. It would show that these smaller hospitals would not perform these procedures even if they had the equipment. Most do not have a sufficient volume of patients to justify hiring the technicians and clinical staff required for these procedures.

Furthermore, purchasing an overly complex system may trigger delays and additional costs for smaller hospitals. System installation and testing may take longer than for a simpler system, and technologists may need additional training.

• Consulting • Technology • Outsourcing

Taking RIS/PACS to the next level

The process of selecting appropriate RIS/PACS systems involves conversations that cross boundaries between clinical insights, workflow analysis, and IT infrastructure. On that foundation, hospitals can build the processes and integrated systems required to improve the delivery of healthcare while, at the same time, managing costs.

To achieve that goal, hospitals need to adopt a holistic, lifecycle view of their medical imaging systems, spanning the running and management of these systems over the seven to ten years they are in use.

Business, clinical and IT perspectives are all necessary to effectively answer questions such as:

"How can we improve our quality assurance? Reduce our implementation costs? Respond to shortages of specialists coupled with rising patient demand?"

Distilling insights from the vast treasure trove of data produced by RIS/PACS systems is essential to transforming the practice of Radiology. Current capabilities in healthcare analytics now make it possible to perform the necessary analysis across such vast datasets. Every year, hospitals produce hundreds of thousands of images. Each of those images represents a transaction that can be mined for insights to protect patient safety, to train technologists and to improve the use of resources.

For example, hospitals can track their patients' radiation exposure through digital mammography, CAT scans, or other procedures. Analysis of a hospital's medical imaging data would also allow Radiation Departments to pinpoint performance gaps, such as a technologist who produces an unacceptably high number of poor-quality images, and then to implement the appropriate remediation through training or mentoring.

Mining workflow data will lower implementation, training, and management costs of RIS/PACS systems. It will also help hospital systems select appropriate equipment for both large and small hospitals in their network. Further, holistic lifecycle management of medical imaging systems, combined with the use of healthcare analytics, will help hospitals save time and money while improving patient care.

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