

Wentworth-Douglass Hospital Improves Radiology Efficiency with RIS/PACS Replacement

At a Glance

Organization

Wentworth-Douglass Hospital
Dover, N.H.

- 178 beds, largest acute-care center in the seacoast area
- 290 physicians, 98% board-certified or board-eligible
- Level II trauma center with 35,000 visits annually
- Named to 100 Most Wired® Hospitals and Health Systems

Solution Spotlight

- Horizon Medical Imaging™
- Horizon Rad Station™

Critical Issues

- Limited PACS capabilities
- Inflexible workflow management
- High turnaround times for reports

Results

- Created sophisticated access to radiology images across the enterprise
- Enhanced workflow processes for technologists and radiologists
- Lowered report turnaround from 24 to 3 hours

When Wentworth-Douglass Hospital replaced its first-generation RIS/PACS (radiology information system/picture archiving communications system), it seized the opportunity to equip radiologists with a solution that met their needs. Today, radiologists have a paperless environment and anytime, anywhere access to vital patient information. In addition to giving radiologists the ability to customize their workflow, the organization has improved efficiency by reducing radiology report turnaround times from 24 hours to as short as three hours at times. With tools in the hospital's new RIS/PACS, final reports can be distributed as soon as they are completed, bypassing the dictation and transcription process.

Challenges

Wentworth-Douglass Hospital is the largest acute-care hospital in the seacoast region of New Hampshire and southern Maine. It brought its first PACS system online in 2002. Then, radiologists struggled with the initial move from film to the rapidly developing digital world of medical imaging. The hospital moved slowly, adding one modality at a time.

"It wasn't an easy system for radiologists to use," recalls Becky Wozmak, PACS administrator,

Wentworth-Douglass. "It wasn't user-friendly, and many of the tools needed were not a part of the product."

It became a struggle using a PACS with limited functionality that affected productivity. For example, users could not create individual display protocols. Display protocols had to be configured by the PACS administrator. And it was difficult to access previous studies or ensure that a file was complete before reading images.

The imaging department also found that remote vendor support for its old PACS was slow and inadequate for a busy hospital. In fact, if a workstation wasn't functioning when clinicians arrived for work, it sometimes took up to four hours for the vendor to respond.

The first step in selecting a replacement system was creating a PACS team with representatives from across the health system, including IT personnel, radiologists, technologists, emergency department (ED) physicians and senior leadership.

"We included physicians who were users of the current system because they had a lot to gain by having a voice in a new purchase," explains Wozmak. "We reached out to physicians from each specialty area and then interviewed them to find out what they needed in a new system."

Case Study

“McKesson’s PACS has really given our physicians and staff much greater control and ownership of their work.”

Becky Wozmak

PACS Administrator

Wentworth-Douglass Hospital

In addition to upgrading the system used by radiologists, ED physicians required a diagnostic workstation. They needed the ability to perform preliminary image readings during evening hours and then electronically communicate the preliminary findings report.

Answers

Wentworth-Douglass selected the Horizon Medical Imaging™ RIS/PACS from McKesson, based upon its extensive features and reputation for vendor support. Members of the radiology group became familiar with the system at another facility and were impressed by its capabilities and ease of use.

“There were key things radiologists were looking for, such as report design and the RAD reporting features. These features were superior to what any other vendor offered,” says Wozmak. “It wasn’t that the radiologists wanted a vendor because they were using it at another site. They knew McKesson had the solution they needed.”

Technologists now perform procedures and make corrections to patient files without involving the PACS administrator. The system’s document-scanning function also eliminated the mounds of paper documents that accumulated as patient forms were signed and processed.

Results

Horizon Medical Imaging has improved user flexibility and increased the efficiency of imaging workflow at Wentworth-Douglass. Plus, radiology report turnaround time has declined from 24 hours to as short as three hours.

With Horizon Rad Station™, radiologists no longer have to deal with paper documents or wait for technologists to bring them completed patient folders. Radiologists have all documents and patient information available in one central location. Sophisticated electronic reporting features have increased efficiency, enabling physicians to concentrate on reading images and providing diagnosis. In addition, display protocols can be easily created to meet specific diagnostic needs.

Radiologists can also customize their workflow with the enhanced ability to keep multiple files open while performing consultations. And access to a single user interface is now available in multiple care settings — ranging from the emergency department or on the Web through the hospital’s physician portal.

“McKesson’s PACS has really given our physicians and staff much greater control and ownership of their work,” concludes Wozmak.

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