

Modular workflow solution transformed key aspects of imaging operation

05.31.11



As director of the Center for Diagnostic Imaging, Joseph Oksemberg knew the organization needed to improve a range of workflow issues. (Courtesy: Center for Diagnostic Imaging)

With four state-the-art imaging centers in the South Florida area, including two comprehensive breast care centers, things can get fairly hectic. By providing fully digital, full modality outpatient studies, our offices are always busy.

MOUNTING PROBLEMS

Despite our bustling schedules, there were some problems we needed to iron out. Treating and caring for patients in our outpatient settings and getting people the tests they needed was not an issue and those processes rolled along smoothly.

Instead, we needed help with a range of workflow issues. For instance, our workflow process was clunky and transcription turnaround times were unpredictable. Our transcription service had unpredictable study turnaround times that ranged between an average of 24 to 36 hours. Our referring doctors were upset about the transcription turnaround times to the point where something had to be done. Although radiologists were up-to-date on dictations, transcriptions kept falling behind.

In addition, basic document management was cumbersome and we had a full-time person dedicated to filing papers into charts. With these types of time-consuming issues occurring at the basic level, it's no surprise that distribution of medical records was also a big problem.

Paperwork continued to get backed up. The front office staff was constantly faxing out reports. They were using a high-speed copier/printer/fax machine to distribute these reports, which took time and resources, and didn't reduce our paper load. Study sources were not managed, which hampered our marketing activities to improve relationships with referring doctors. Although we had a marketing team to get the word out to the surrounding communities about the range of services we offered, we did not have an effective way to track what they were doing or quantify the gains made in their efforts.

FINDING THE RIGHT OPTION

We started examining the options to help us manage our workflow quandaries. Personal attention and customer service were our priorities. We didn't want to have any interruptions of services. And, of course, we wanted the organization to incur minimal hardware costs.

After carefully considering several systems, options and providers, we chose Integrated Document Solutions (IDS), a Ft. Lauderdale-based organization that provides Web-based, modular electronic health record applications focused on automating healthcare documentation. IDS services include speech recognition, multispecialty transcription services, document scanning, bar-coded forms management, administrative reporting and mobile applications. These applications can be tied to customized workflow portals and interfaced with a third-party system.

The modular end-to-end workflow characteristic of the IDS systems transformed key aspects of our operation, including scheduling, forms management, transcription and report creation, document scanning and study routing, as well as referral and marketing management.

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS

By focusing on our most pressing needs, IDS was able to provide a solution for each of the major issues. We implemented AbbaDox for our workflow portal, Reforma for forms management, Voice2Dox for speech recognition, the IDS transcriptions services, and the Referring Physician Manager for referral management. Each of these technological components filled a crucial role and addressed problems that were not going to go away on their own.

Workflow portal. AbbaDox allowed us to automate the patient documentation process and move to more of a paperless system. With AbbaDox, we improved our turnaround time to a guaranteed 4 to 6 hours. Since the old average fell between 24 and 36 hours, being able to shorten the time by approximately 20 to 30 hours was

a tremendous improvement.

The central, online portal for referring doctors and staff enabled them to see the progress of their studies, retrieve reports and access historical records through electronic patient files. Studies can be signed electronically from anywhere through AbbaDox. Completed studies are automatically sent to referring physicians by means of their preferred delivery choice, whether it is by fax, secure e-mail or by logging into their own account in AbbaDox.

The system enables remote billers to securely access and code patient visits, and serve as an interactive dashboard that provides administrators with key information. AbbaDox facilitates the secure distribution of documents individually or in batches through a fax machine, e-mail or forwarding within an organization without jeopardizing data integrity or a patient's security. The system also enables organizations to send entire charts or documents from multiple patients, instead of manually distributing files one at a time. By the end of the day, everything is done.

Forms management. The Reforma feature provided bar-coding and automated scanning and cut out hours of filing work. We dramatically reduced paper-based charts, and our combined facilities scan more than 40,000 pages per month.

Speech recognition. With Voice2Dox and transcription services, radiologists can dictate cases exactly as they did before using their preferred method. There was virtual no learning curve. As a result, reports are typed faster and more accurately. Templates and work types are customized to each doctor's account. Dictations can instantly be marked "STAT" for high-priority flagging.

We can inject blocks of commonly used text anywhere in a structured report. Templates have clearly highlighted blanks for fast and easy editing, which enable interfacing with the billing and scheduling systems. The IDS systems reduce the entire reporting process to three mouse clicks: selecting a normal; submitting the report; and confirming an electronic signature. Reports are automatically placed into the queue and distributed to the appropriate referring physicians.

Referral management. Understanding where our business is coming from and being able to quickly identify trends that affect the bottom line is crucial. The referring physician manager instantly tracks referral volume and turnaround time for demanding accounts.

This feature blends contact management functionality with a referrer marketing analysis engine to provide a comprehensive management tool and identify volume and source of our studies. We can obtain several referral study productivity reports. Trend reporting shows a 3-month comparison of study volumes by referring physicians. Study volume identifies the total number of studies by a referring physician over a given time period. Patient studies note the number of studies performed for that person.

By staying on top of these details, we can determine if the efforts by the marketing team are paying off. Marketing representatives use iPhones to access referring study volumes and log visit details with referring and prospective doctors. A built-in contact management system tracks marketing efforts to each referring provider. Notes can be entered manually or based on templates. A call scheduling module allows marketers to manage their daily call volumes. And call panel reports provide oversight for administrators to ensure regular follow-ups.

And perhaps the biggest bonus is that we gained all of these efficiencies with minimal interruption – clearly a big plus.

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