

Profitable Women's Imaging Through Increased Efficiency

Connecting disparate systems is key

FOURTH IN A SIX-PART SERIES

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Across the country, most medical imaging enterprises are divided into two types:

- 1) Those that have women's imaging programs but are struggling each month to reach profitability, and
- 2) Those that dropped women's imaging due to an inability to reach a suitable profit level.

In a recent survey of the members of the Society of Breast Imaging, 74% of the respondents stated that they now perform breast MRI. Of the balance, 43% indicated that they intend to begin offering MRI in the near future.

Both camps have in common the knowledge that typically, the bulk of the women's imaging scans are screening mammograms and that they are primarily responsible for attracting the higher tech, higher reimbursing scans that they need to maintain profitability. These additional scans can come not only from female patients who have had mammography, but also from their husbands or others whom they can refer for an MRI or PET/CT, for example.

Women's imaging is often an accommodation to referrers, who prefer to send their patients to as few imaging resources as possible.

But women's imaging does not have to be the medical imaging "loss leader." Through the use of existing technology, systems can be developed that can reduce turnaround times and increase the productivity of the department.

Dr. Sarah Friedewald is a fellowship-trained radiologist with the Center for Advanced Care in Park Ridge, Ill., who has been using MEDxConnect to improve productivity.

She says, "People have different types of equipment and the software enables us to read cases from anywhere. MEDxConnect can take images from any vendor and produce images we can read. We have been using it for the past 3 months for breast

mammography. Since I am fellowship trained, all breast MRIs get sent to me through MEDxConnect. And since mammography depends on prior images, this helps speed the process."

Dr. Friedewald notes that her increased productivity level is more than anecdotal: "We are reading more studies per day now."

Increased productivity is crucial but it is not the only concern of a women's imaging program. Scan volume is also essential to the equation but that volume must increase with the appropriate efficiencies.

"We are getting more business as a result of this program," says Dr. Friedewald. "One group for whom we read is an OB/GYN and they need someone to read for them. We now have the capability to read offsite for them."

MEDxConnect offers a holistic solution to connecting disparate systems. Designed to manage the workflow of an imaging health care enterprise, the MEDxConnect system provides a suite of offerings that has the power to connect systems from multiple vendors, that offers proven interoperability, and that allows an organization with disparate multivendor systems to function as one virtual enterprise.

As health care reforms unfold, the interoperability and workflow solutions provided by a system such as MEDxConnect will be essential to the successful implementation of electronic patient-information systems, as well as to their value in cost reduction and improved patient care.

The pending health care legislation may or may not alter the women's imaging landscape. Regardless of what changes in Washington, imaging enterprises across the country will be researching ways to boost productivity and efficiency without reducing the level of quality or patient care.

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