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National Survey of Radiologists Reveals Systemic Problems Hurting Industry and Patient Care

Ninety Four Percent Link IT Hurdles to Missed or Delayed Diagnosis; Almost Seventy Percent Report Unnecessary or Duplicative Scans

CHICAGO, IL (Dec. 3, 2008) – A national survey released today (at RSNA) uncovers a host of systemic problems and challenges that are hindering radiologists' ability to control skyrocketing demand and negatively impacting patient diagnosis and care. Of those surveyed, almost all radiologists cited a strong link between health IT deficiencies and patient care. Ninety-four percent connected the inability of medical imaging systems to communicate with information systems of physicians and hospitals with missed or delayed diagnosis. Seventy-one percent of radiologists consider this failure to share data with other physicians and hospitals as a growing crisis for the industry. The research was supported by Advanced Radiology Consultants and administered by e-Rewards Market Research, an online market research company.

The study also discovered that almost seven in ten radiologists surveyed (69%) reported experiencing unnecessary or duplicative scans in the past six months. The growing national concern over the dramatic rise in CT scans nationally stems from evidence of increased cancer risk due to overexposure to radiation. Totalling 62 million CT scans annually¹, the amount performed in the U.S. has nearly doubled between 2000 and 2005² with more than 30 percent deemed to be unnecessary or redundant each year³.

"Not only must radiologists have access to previous reports and images in order to make a proper evaluation, but also to protect patients against unnecessary scans that can harm their health," said Dr. John Anastos, chairman of radiology at Advocate Lutheran Hospital in Chicago. "Patient anxiety and stress coupled with the risks of overexposure to radiation are all the unfortunate byproducts of information systems that can't speak to each other in real time."

The study also found that well over half of radiologists (62%) cite access to patient medical records as an impediment to their work and ninety-six percent agreed or strongly agreed that this problem creates medical risks for patients.

"The inability of physicians, hospitals, patients, insurers and government agencies to communicate with each other creates a legacy of waste, inefficiency, cost, and most importantly, serious risk to patient safety," said John B. Macfarlane, CEO of Compressus Inc, a medical imaging software company. "True interoperability between the information systems of all these players is a vital piece to solving the health care puzzle."

¹ National Council on Radiation Protection

² Center for Studying Health System Change

³ New England Journal of Medicine

The research also reported that the radiology industry has reached a workflow tipping point. Eighty-four percent of radiologists surveyed, report not having enough time to access each scan, read it, and deliver results. In addition, eighty-one percent cite handling the increasing number of radiology scans as a challenge to their effectiveness. These problems will only be compounded as the 79 million members of the boomer generation – the largest in our history – continue to age they will place enormous demands and pressure on an already overburdened industry.

“With increasing demand, critical staffing shortages, fluctuating reimbursement, and regulatory issues, radiologists are entering a perfect storm of workflow inefficiency,” said Dr. Anastos. “Without real time interoperability throughout the healthcare enterprise, diagnostic turnaround can grind to a halt resulting in longer hospital stays, increased costs and delayed treatment for potentially life-threatening conditions.”

Additional Survey Findings

- Eighty-six percent of radiologists surveyed cited the financial restrictions associated with the Deficit Reduction Act as a hindrance to the industry and over half consider it a major challenge.
- Sixty-three percent are concerned about the growing trend of radiology practice consolidation through mergers and acquisitions and almost eight in ten radiologists (78%) believe the trend will have a negative impact on patient quality of care and safety.
- Eighty-nine percent surveyed agree that the productivity of radiologists would be improved by universal remote access to scanned images.
- Seventy-three percent of those radiologists surveyed receive x-rays or scans from more than three different facilities – often with varying information systems - and sixteen percent receive them from more than ten separate facilities.

Survey Methodology

The research was conducted as an online survey of a national sample of 101 practicing, diagnostic radiologists. The survey was administered by e-Rewards Market Research, which through its Physician Panel, provides access to 95% of the physician market, including 250 subspecialties such as radiology. e-Rewards has purchased and/or licensed key association and governmental databases, including the Drug Enforcement Agency number (DEA#), Medicare Unique Physician Identification Number (UPIN), and the American Medical Association (AMA) Medical Education Number (ME#), which verify a physician’s practicing status. These verification resources, combined with standard verification processes, help to check the validity of physicians. The survey was conducted between November 7 and 13, 2008.

About Compressus Inc.

Established in 2000, Compressus, Inc. is a medical software company offering proven solutions for problems of interoperability and interconnectivity in the rapidly growing healthcare IT market. Its MEDxConnect™ software is the first solution that indexes, integrates and routes all relevant patient medical information to the healthcare professional in real time, thus dramatically improving physician efficiency, reducing enterprise costs and increasing patient safety. The MEDxConnect products address the problems associated with integrating healthcare enterprises plagued by the lack of connectivity and interoperability between disparate vendors of HIS, RIS and PACS systems. Designed to manage the workflow of an imaging healthcare enterprise, the MEDxConnect System is a suite of offerings that has the power to connect disparate HIS/RIS/PACS systems and provide automated interoperability to the enterprise and allows an organization with disparate multi-vendor system function as one virtual enterprise. (www.compressus.com)

About Advanced Radiology Consultants

Advanced Radiology Consultants is a 20+ member group of physicians that provides subspecialty radiology services to Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois and multiple independent outpatient imaging facilities.

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