

THE SOLUTION: Automated Workflows

Before 7 Medical's on-demand PACS, Prairie Ridge's images were developed on film. After being processed and labeled, current films and priors were couriered daily to Lake Region Radiology Group for interpretation. Reports were faxed back to referring physicians the following day, and the original hard-copy reports were delivered a few days later.

Prairie Ridge added a computed radiography (CR, or digital X-ray) unit that dramatically cut exam times from seven minutes to three. To complete its digital strategy, Prairie Ridge implemented 7 Medical's on-demand PACS service alongside its digital modalities. Now digital images from all but one modality are sent directly to an onsite PACS gateway server, the 7i Gateway™. The PACS server electronically routes studies to the radiology group for interpretation, eliminating film, chemicals, courier and related costs. More important, turnaround times on radiology reports were cut down to hours versus days.

"Stat reports are back within 30 minutes, and regular reports within three to four hours," said Michele Wiskow, X-ray Supervisor at Prairie Ridge. "Patients don't have to wait as long and our workflow is more automated. We've never seen that kind of turnaround, which means we can diagnose and prescribe care to patients that much faster. Plus, 7 Medical provided us with a scanning solution, so we are able to scan radiology reports and store them with the images in the PACS."

Physicians especially like the ability to show patients their images a few minutes after exams are taken. The easy-to-use 2D/3D Web viewer gives physicians access to view images and use simple tools to take preliminary measurements, alter contrast, zoom and more. The patient experience is improved because diagnosis and a care plan can be prescribed in a more timely manner. In addition, reports and images can be read side by side in the Web viewer anytime, anywhere—from the hospital, home office, hotel or any location with Internet access.

7 Medical also delivered a CD/DVD importing and burning solution. Prior images that come in on CD can be easily opened, viewed and imported into the PACS, as well as sent with the current study to the radiologist. Images can also be conveniently burned to CD/DVD so patients can take images with them to referring physicians. A built-in viewer on the CDs/DVDs ensures that referring physicians are able to view the images on the receiving end.

"We were ready to transition to a digital environment, but financing was slowing us down. 7 Medical helped us compare our film costs to its full-service PACS. Film, chemicals and courier fees really add up. By moving to digital, we were able to reduce our expenses. With 7 Medical's low monthly pricing the choice became easy."

Judy Kruize
Ancillary Service Director
Prairie Ridge Hospital

"The other added benefit that tipped the scale for us was the built-in backup and disaster recovery," said Kruize. "Knowing that a copy of all of our images is backed up and stored off site in 7 Medical's data center gives us peace of mind. It's good to know that we can quickly restore and retrieve images if something were to happen."

Before implementing the PACS, Prairie Ridge wanted to account for proper training and change management. “Our core focus is on the patient, providing quality care and patient satisfaction, so it was key that 7 Medical provided a turnkey service with project managers to walk us through implementation and training,” said Kruize.

In addition to training Prairie Ridge physicians and staff, 7 Medical provided “train-the-trainer” sessions with a dedicated super-user at the facility. “Now, as new users come on, we are able to get them up and running on our own. As a backup, we can always escalate to 7 Medical support 24/7,” said Kruize.

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THE OUTCOME

7 Medical’s on-demand PACS was originally installed and integrated to the CR unit in November 2008. Onsite CT and mobile MRI were added in April 2009. Prairie Ridge’s PACS now supports two onsite modalities (CR and CT) and four mobile modalities (MRI, nuclear medicine, mammography and ultrasound). In July 2009,

the facility also added a CR at Prairie Medical Associates, an affiliate located in Morris, Minnesota. Physicians and staff from both sites are able to tap into the same PACS system to view and manage patient images and reports. Users are able to log in from any location via the Web.

The PACS currently handles volumes of 350 studies per month. Images are automatically routed from the modality to the reading radiologist and to 7 Medical’s data center for long-term storage. Automated workflows have reduced turnaround times from days to hours, even 30 minutes for stat reads.

“7 Medical’s on-demand service made PACS affordable for us,” said Kruize. “The PACS runs without requiring much on our part, but it’s good to know we can call 7 Medical anytime. It’s nice to be able to reach people with the expertise you need, when you need it.”

The PACS service is highly scalable, with technology upgrades, updates and maintenance included—which means Prairie Ridge never has to worry about whether there is enough storage space to accommodate growth in imaging volumes or the addition of new modalities. 7 Medical’s service runs from a Type II SAS 70 certified data center which also fully complies with HIPAA privacy and security regulations.

**To learn more about the 7i Imaging-on-Demand PACS Suite, call us today.
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