

Digital System Revolutionizes Radiology

The Lourdes Health System has installed a new digital radiology system that greatly reduces the turnaround time for X-rays, ultrasounds, CT scans and MRIs, and allows referring physicians to view high-quality studies and reports from their office or home computers.

The state-of-the-art Fuji Synapse Picture Archive Communication System (PACS) is available at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center in Camden and Lourdes Medical Center of Burlington County in Willingboro. Lourdes launched the system this summer.

"It's better for the patient; it's better for the clinician; it's better for the radiologist," said Glenn Artico, M.D., a Radiologist on staff at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center.

Film-less System Improves Efficiency

With PACS, images are recorded onto an imaging plate by a laser and stored on a computer server. No chemical processing is involved. The images are available for interpretation by the radiologist shortly after being taken by the technician.

"It has improved our efficiency by 20 to 30 percent. There's no doubt in my mind," said Gerald Nissenbaum, M.D., a Radiologist on staff at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center. "We get the images, interpret them and get the reports out quickly. The bottom line is better patient care. That's what we're here for."

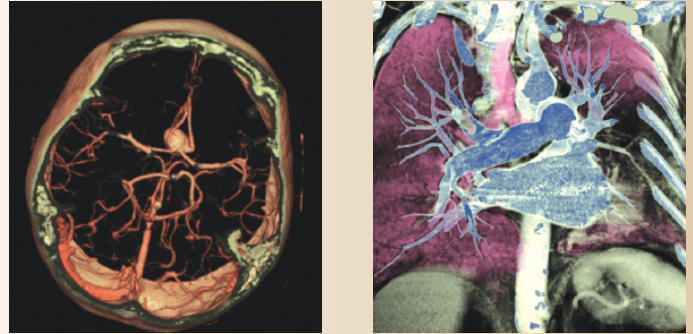
"The radiologists don't have to walk down the hall, request the films, wait 10 minutes, walk back and then put them up on the board," said Maureen Hetu, Lourdes Health System Chief Information Officer. "Now it's a lot quicker. You can even have five people looking at the image at the same time. The work flow has improved, and you don't have to worry about losing films."

PACS images also are higher quality than those on film, and can be enhanced on the computer. "You can zoom in on a portion of an image that you want to see, or lighten or darken," said Barbara O'Donnell, Corporate Director of Clinical Services. "This enhances the diagnostic capabilities of the radiologist."

Easy Viewing

The images can be viewed by the radiologist and referring physician, either in the hospital, the office or home through a secure Internet connection called the Lourdes Physician Dashboard. Reports and other supporting documents scanned into PACS can be viewed alongside the images. Previous studies can be compared with recent images on the same screen.

"We can see the studies the patient previously had. We can view the types of studies and their reports," said Dr. Artico. "We can instantly view this information with the mere click of the mouse."



These CT scans of the brain and chest are each composed of approximately 350 stacked images and can be viewed on Lourdes' new PACS system. The speed and quality of PACS images allows physicians to more quickly assess and treat patients.

Patients receive their images and reports on a CD. The program to run the CD is included, so a referring physician does not require any special software.

Life-saving Results

PACS allows referring physicians to have interpreted studies in as little as five minutes, as opposed to more than an hour with film. Such speed can save lives in the emergency room.

"PACS gives referring physicians the ability to obtain results right away. In the ER, it has allowed us to reduce the time from diagnosis to intervention. Quicker turnaround time means we can initiate treatment more quickly and improve the overall wait time for ER services," said Al Sacchetti, M.D., Chief of Emergency Medicine at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center.

In addition, because PACS is Web-based, Lourdes radiologists can consult online with other colleagues from around the country, giving referring physicians another level of expertise, said Kathleen V. Greatrex, M.D., Acting Chief of Radiology at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center.

Physicians seeking affiliation with Lourdes can request access to the Dashboard and the PACS system by calling the Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center Medical Affairs Office at 856-757-3513 or the Lourdes Medical Center of Burlington County Medical Affairs Office at 609-835-3081.

Current Lourdes-affiliated physicians without Dashboard access can call the Information Services Physician Support Pager at 856-223-2245 or the Assistant Director, Information Services, at 856-482-4919.

