

DRA Needn't Affect DR

With DRA cutbacks and growing concerns over the cost of new technology, Anne Ji of Canon Medical Systems, a division of Canon USA Inc, has heard many customers describe tales of CEOs revising their budgets and refraining from purchasing a brand-new digital radiography (DR) system. So what this marketing supervisor tells them next is probably music to their ears.

"They don't have to spend all this money to throw away 10-year-old analog equipment just to get DR," Ji said. "There's a more budget-friendly solution out there for them—upgrading their existing x-ray equipment by retrofitting a Canon DR Sensor."

Specializing in the sale, service, and maintenance of new and remanufactured diagnostic imaging equipment, Florida-based Virtual Imaging is the national distributor for Canon's DR technology, which they offer to high-volume hospitals or imaging centers. "One of the greatest things about the Canon DR is that it can be integrated into existing fluoroscopic and radiographic rooms without the physician or hospital having to replace their existing equipment," said Chris Duca, Virtual Imaging chief operating officer. "Canon DR also can be easily placed into numerous mobile and portable x-ray configurations." To sum it up, Ji said, "They are able to take our DR imaging technology and marry it with whatever configuration the end user wants. This results in an economic way to convert from analog to digital radiography while reaping the benefits of an increased workflow and patient comfort."

Therefore, facilities looking to upgrade from an analog to a digital system do not need to throw out their entire existing setup, nor are they required to undergo restructuring or

recertification. Rather, Virtual Imaging can replace the old analog detector with Canon's digital one. For example, its RadPRO DR upgrade kit has the ability to transition an AMX4/4+ from conventional film use to full digital capabilities in a matter of hours, instead of days. Customers can also purchase an entirely new system, in the form of Virtual Imaging's RadPro mobile with Canon's C X D I - 5 0 G portable detector.

According to both companies, the joint solution improves on the high costs associated with physical storage of cassettes, cassette readers, or films. Replacing CR cassettes also comes with a cost. "With the number of patients that facilities are seeing on a daily basis, and then needing to store their films, over time, it can be quite exorbitant," Duca said. "With DR, all of those steps are gone. You take your exposure and send the images through the host network or through the Internet to be read, and then images can be stored in hard drives by the thousands."

Facilities and practices are seeing that reimbursements are declining, Duca continued, while the cost of maintaining their medical systems is rising—a dichotomy that leaves administrators



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scrambling for ways to reduce operating costs while providing optimal care, time, and staff. "When replacing film, both CR and DR have initial costs, but with CR, the cost of replacing cassettes must be weighed against a DR panel, which is more durable over time," Duca said. "By upgrading to DR, you improve workflow and patient throughput, and extend the life cycle of your existing equipment."

Agreeing with Duca, Ji emphasized that their technology offers facilities a variety of choices depending on what their needs are. "Whether they don't have enough space or don't have the budget, but they need the workflow, we can provide them with a solution," she said.

—Elaine Sanchez

Physician-Provider-Payor Network Is Up and Running in Minnesota

Medicalis Corp, Kitchener, Ontario, recently announced the creation of an integrated radiology ordering and decision support network in Minnesota. The Web-based network unites referring physicians, imaging providers, and payors, applying evidence-based clinical guidelines to physician orders and facilitating real-time communication between physicians and radiologists.

"We're convinced that this is where

radiology will go in the future," said Liz Quam, director of the Center for Diagnostic Imaging (CDI), Milwaukee, a participating practice. "When you're talking about advanced imaging, there will always be a place for imaging not integrated with the physician practice, but that advanced imaging needs to be appropriate."

The Medicalis network features a structured ordering process and clinical decision support designed to facilitate

appropriate acquisitions, reducing unnecessary testing.

—Cat Vasko

Webextend

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