Smart approaches to top-level decision making

Strategic Financial Planning

Growing Hospital-Based Radiology Services

By Scott Seidelmann



Georgia-based Atlanta Medical Center South is among a number of hospitals that are successfully implementing an accountable, standards-based radiology approach. In two years, the hospital has seen a 42 percent increase in high-tech imaging referrals from its top 10 referring physicians. In addition, hospital leaders believe radiology improvements have contributed to increased ED throughput and a reduction in overall LOS. $\rightarrow \rightarrow$

REPRINT Fall 2012



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Current Reality Calls for Improvement

Radiology touches every major disease category and most patients in and outside of the hospital, accounting for nearly 10 percent of U.S. healthcare expenditures. It is often the most profitable outpatient service line for hospitals, and estimates project that radiology will grow another 9 percent over the next five years, with high-tech imaging (such as MRI, CT, and PET scans) expected to increase 18 percent. Yet, imaging services are largely delivered in a nonintegrated, mom-and-pop fashion.

Of the 3,000 U.S. radiology groups, 93 percent have 10 or fewer radiologists. Often there is just one radiology group in a town, which typically does not have the scale or sophistication needed to meet today's imaging demands.

This is not only incongruous, it's also problematic. These groups are very likely subsidized by the local hospital, and they typically have to sub-contract with a teleradiology provider to handle preliminary nighttime reads—an additional cost for either the group or the hospital.

More alarmingly, radiology lacks accountability and transparency. There are no well-defined or widely used performance standards or metrics to assess the accuracy, timeliness, or utilization of radiology reads.

A related issue is the lack of access to subspecialty radiologists (i.e., those with advanced training in a subspecialty, such as pediatric neurological disorders). A 2008 study found that general and subspecialty radiologists had different interpretations of high-tech images 4.4 percent of the time (Premerus, Medical Misdiagnosis in America 2008: A Persistent Problem with a Promising Solution). The study revealed that, overall, the subspecialist reports were more definitive and less likely to suggest follow-up procedures. More accurate diagnoses by subspecialty experts typically lead to more targeted, efficient treatments, resulting in significant downstream cost savings from faster emergency department (ED) throughput and shorter lengths of stay (LOS).

New Model Drives ROI

In early 2011, Atlanta Medical Center South was facing an all-too-common situation with its radiology department: instability in contracting with different individuals and small groups of radiologists and dissatisfaction among some physicians with the timeliness and consistency of radiology services.

Tele-access to subspecialists. Today, at the hospital's south campus facility, a single national provider of radiology services is responsible for interpreting all images. Three general radiologists are on-site to manage the program and provide 24/7 coverage for all interventional radiology procedures.

The hospital also has 24/7 tele-access to a comprehensive network of off-site radiologists that includes all subspecialties: neuroradiology, musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, women's imaging, pediatric, nuclear medicine, etc. Each of these radiologists is licensed in the state of Georgia and credentialed by the appropriate health plans.

Workflow management. The radiology company's cloud-based radiology information system (RIS) is integrated with the hospital's own RIS, electronic health record, and picture archiving and communication system. The cloud-based RIS is the de facto workflow manager for the department. When a neurological case arrives at the hospital at 2:00 a.m. and needs a 30-minute turnaround, the RIS assigns it to an available neuroradiologist on the tele-access panel.

"Not only have we stabilized an unstable situation, we now provide a higher level of care in imaging; instead of one generalist trying to read the less frequent, highly specialized types of films, we have subspecialists reading them," says hospital CEO William T. Moore.

Analytics Drive Radiology Improvements

Comparative performance reporting is a powerful tool in improving the value of radiology services. From data spring analytics that give hospitals valuable insights into improving the quality and timeliness of radiology services—not to mention ambulatory growth. When reviewing radiology data for potential improvements, hospital leaders should be asking questions such as the following:

- > Are referring physicians ordering CTs when an X-ray could answer most diagnostic questions?
- > Are physicians ordering unnecessary MRIs on inpatients, which result in higher radiology spend and slower discharge?
- > Is the hospital's orthopedic referral volume low relative to other hospitals of a similar size nationally?
- > What percentage of radiologic studies is turned around in less than two hours—and what's holding up the slower cases?
- > Are physicians ordering CTs with oral contrast in the ED (which is a drag on throughput) when non-contrast CTs can be substituted safely and effectively some of the time?

Major improvements can be achieved in radiology using protocols based on performance data. Consider the recent success with CTs of the abdomen/pelvis, which is a high-risk imaging study. When radiologists fail to diagnose appendicitis or diverticulitis, there's a substantial likelihood of patient morbidity and mortality. However, in recent years, hospitals across the country have been able to reduce the error rate on abdominal/pelvis CTs to 0.8 percent, from 1.8 percent, by adopting the following three steps:*

- > Stop assigning CTs of the abdomen/pelvis to any radiologist who has an error rate higher than 3 percent on this type of study.
- > Ensure that the radiology information system (RIS) warns the radiologist assigned to the case of the high risk of error and of the two most common causes of error (i.e., the failure to diagnose appendicitis and diverticulitis).
- > Force concurrence by having the RIS automatically assign high-risk cases to a second radiologist, whose only job is to rule out appendicitis and diverticulitis.

CTs of the abdomen/pelvis now account for less than 13 percent of clinically significant radiologic errors at the hospitals that adopted these steps, down from 30 percent.

*Based on a Radisphere analysis of five years of error data across more than 100 hospitals and facilities and the subsequent error analysis after the implementation of predictive risk assessment and quality management programs.

Objective peer review and auditing. As

important, Moore says, is true peer review. "If you have a smaller hospital, with two or three radiologists who are best friends, unbiased peer review can be difficult to obtain," he says.

With Atlanta Medical Center South's new approach, all radiologists have 2 percent of their reads selected at random for peer review. Each radiology study is anonymized and assigned to a second radiologist, who does a second complete report. The two reports are then anonymized again and assigned to a third radiologist, who objectively rates them for concurrence or disagreement. The results are then shared with the radiologists, the facility, and the referring physicians.

Each radiologist's performance is also reviewed against predetermined hospital standards for patient safety, timeliness, and critical results communication (i.e., to avoid malpractice claims). Examples of standards include:

- > Final reports: All reports are delivered 24/7 using standardized templates and diagnostic checklists to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- > Timeliness: ED final reads are turned around within 30 minutes, inpatient reads within 90 minutes, and outpatient reads within 24 hours.
- > Communications: Consults and critical findings are provided within 60 minutes.
- > Specialization: All complex and highrisk imaging is read by subspecialists.
- > Diagnostic accuracy: Peer review is proactively performed on a statistically valid sampling of all studies to maintain a <2 percent error rate.</p>
- > Utilization: Utilization data are analyzed by physician, site, and modality to ensure a <10 percent follow-up imaging rate.
- > Patient safety: Compliance with radiation dose reporting is 100 percent.

Atlantic Medical Center South's Radiology Performance, Q1 2013

Performance Metric	Radiology Quality Institute Standard*	Atlanta Medical Center South Performance
Final reports	100% final reports (no preliminary reads)	100% final reports (no preliminary reads)
Turnaround time (by priority level)		
> Stroke protocol	<20 min	10 min
> Hyperacute	<30 min	19 min
> STAT	<60 min	19 min
> Routine	<24 hours	8 hours 57 min
Turnaround time (by place of service)		
> Emergency department	<30 min	25 min
> Inpatient	<90 min	4 hours 19 min
> Outpatient	<24 hours	7 hours 43 min
Communication		
> Consultations 24/7	<60 min	33 min
> Critical finding communication [‡]	<60 min	25 min
Specialization		
> MRI subspecialist reads	100%	99%
> PET subspecialist reads	100%	N/A
Diagnostic accuracy		
> Prospective double-blind peer review	>1%	2.3%
> Clinically significant error rate	<2%	0%
Utilization		
> Follow-up imaging rate	<10%	8%
> Mammography recall rate [§]	8-14%	11.2%

*The Radiology Quality Institute's complete set of performance standards is available at radiology quality institute.com.

‡ Average time until a critical finding is acknowledged by the referring physician.

§The mammography recall rate is calculated on an annual basis in January for the previous 12 months and represents the average rate across all clients. This recall rate is based on the number of instances that a patient is called back for additional studies as a result of having screening mammography performed.

Source: Radisphere, 2013. Used with permission.

This quarterly report from 2013 shows Atlanta Medical Center South consistently bettering, in some cases by a considerable margin, standards set by the Radiology Quality Institute.

Continuous measurement and reporting. In

addition, Atlanta Medical Center South now gets monthly performance reports (see exhibit above) that show the radiology service's performance against national benchmarks for accuracy, turnaround times, utilization, etc.

"We have a more efficient department because we are accountable to meet predetermined benchmarks, which are set in accord with performance registered in a national database; there are set turnaround times for each area of service inpatient, outpatient, ED, stat, or routine," says Moore. "We get monthly performance standards reports in dashboard form. Without that, you really don't know how you're doing, it's just anecdotal."

Accountability Propels Volumes

Hospitals looking to boost their radiology market share can improve their reputation among referring physicians and patients by adopting a performancebased radiology approach. What's the best argument for convincing orthopedic surgeons to let your hospital handle their imaging? It's to say: "We have radiologists with advance training in musculoskeletal imaging who will read your MRIs in less than four hours." Also, improved throughput is a major differentiator. Consistently turning ED studies around in less than 30 minutes (and accurately measuring and reporting that) will generate dividends in ED costs and reputation.

What's the best way to reach parents of children, 90 percent of whom need some form of imaging when they show up in the ED? It's to tell them: "We have pediatric radiologists who will diagnose your child in less than 30 minutes." Patients also benefit from several other outputs of performance-based imaging, including lower variable costs and shorter waiting times for imaging equipment/results.

Scott Seidelmann is president and CEO of Radisphere, Westport, CT (scott.seidelmann@radispheregroup.com).

Hospital ABC

		SERVICE	LEVELS					
Average Turn Around Time (excludes MG)								
Priority	Target TAT	Avg TAT	Made %	Made	Late	Total		
1. Hyperacute	00:30	00:16	88%	237	32	269		
2. Stat	00:60	00:19	97%	22,851	603	23,454		
3. Expedited	04:00	01:25	97%	1,514	47	1,561		
4. Routine	24:00	04:27	99%	13,249	166	13,415		
Grand Total			98%	37,851	848	38,699		

Quarterly Report 2nd Quarter 2012 compare to 2nd Quarter 2013



📕 1. Hyperacute 📒 2. Stat 📕 3. Expedited 📕 4. Routine

ABC DEF

Volume By Priority



Critical Findings

100%

75%

50%

25%

0%

Total Study Volume:	38,699	% of Total Study Volume: 2.57%		% called within 1 H	Iour: 98%
Place of Service	Total	Avg. Tat	% Called within 1 hour	Called %	Volume Mix
ED	700	00:10	99%	100%	70%
Inpatient	147	00:21	98%	100%	15%
Outpatient	146	00:27	92%	100%	15%
	993	00:14	98%	100%	100%

* Critical Finding Turn Around Time is 1 hour

MR Read by Sub-Specialist

Read by Sub-Specialist	Total MR	% Read by Sub-Specialist
1,376	1,478	93.10%

Remote Consults

Total Study Volume:	38,699 Consult Volume:		118	
% of Total Study Volume	0.30%	Average TAT:	02:42	
Top 5 Consults Referring MD	Specialty		Volume	
Dr. Einer	Unclassified		5	
Dr. Baista	Emergency Medicine		5	
Dr. Arne		Emergency Medicine	3	
Dr. Bwen	Emergency Medicine		3	
Dr. Bll	Family Medicine		2	

Volume by Place of Service & Volume Read by Onsite, ED and Sub-Specialist								
Place of Service	Total	Volume Mix	Onsite	ED	Sub-Specialist	Total		
Inpatient	3,398	9%	39%	45%	10%	100%		
Outpatient	15,187	39%	48%	35%	14%	100%		
ED	20,114	52%	21%	67%	5%	100%		
Total	38,699	100%	33%	52%	9%			

OF SERVICE & RADIOLOGIST TYPE



Inpatient Outpatient ED



'F'

Rad Type vs. Place of Service



Average Turn Around Time by Place of Service

8	•				
Place of Service	Avg. TAT	% Made	Made	Late	Total
ED	00:19	98%	19,619	495	20,114
Inpatient	02:09	96%	3,255	143	3,398
Outpatient	03:40	99%	14,977	210	15,187
Total		98%	37,851	848	38,699

REFERRING PHYSICIANS

Top 50 Referring Physicians with Specialty

1 8 1	1 0		
Referring MD	Speciality	Volume	% of Total Study Volume
Vang, Sai	Unclassified	1112	3%
Hubbard, Robyn	Family	884	2%
Walther, Ryanne	Unclassified	822	2%
Paley, Christine	Personal Emergency Response Atte	678	2%
Bezanson, Hannah	Unclassified	672	2%
Gengerke, Jason	Unclassified	633	2%
Thomas, Michelle	Family Medicine	613	2%
Barnett, Mathew B	Nurse Practitioner	607	2%
Tarazon, Jennifer	Family	586	2%
Isaak, Sandra J	Family	575	1%
Levine, Dennis	Nurse Practitioner	575	1%
Dempsey, Michael	Unclassified	565	1%
Huong-schleif, Shu T.	Nurse Practitioner	563	1%
Wilkinson, Janis	Physician Assistant	534	1%
Perry, Lorilee	Nurse Practitioner	519	1%

Johnson, Marc	Sports Medicine	436	1%
Martin, John A	Occupational Medicine	422	1%
Community Care, Family Health	Unclassified	420	1%
Habibe, Alex O	Internal Medicine	383	1%
Warner, Gregory C	Pulmonary Disease	368	1%
Varshney, Anuj	Orthopaedic Surgery	350	1%
Bolt, Laurie	Nurse Practitioner	342	1%
Nguyen, David	Internal Medicine	340	1%
Bayardo, Carlos	Family Medicine	320	1%
WOLOWODIUK, OLEH	Family Medicine	284	1%
Pqtý 'Uj qtg'Medical, Plaza Dinuba	Unclassified	277	1%
Community Care, "UCampus	Unclassified	260	1%
Chatrath, Bhupinder S	Hematology & Oncology	254	1%
Melashenko, Kenneth	Family Medicine	241	1%
Raber, Dustin	Family Medicine	240	1%
Allyn, Lancy D	Specialist	239	1%
Mai, Kenny T	Orthopaedic Surgery	222	1%
Csiszar, Jeffrey W	Specialist	209	1%
Au, Alvin Y	Hepatology	208	1%
Community Care, F Clinic	Unclassified	202	1%
Nagavalli, Sudesh	Internal Medicine	202	1%
Ashok, Seetharam	Urology	192	1%
Sahasranam, Prem	Endocrinology, Diabetes & Metabol	192	1%
Do, Thong	Nephrology	181	0%
Beddoe, Randy	Family Medicine	169	0%
Wickremasinghe, Asela D	Internal Medicine	167	0%
Urrutia, Daniel	Family Medicine	164	0%
Scherer, Thomas	Surgery	162	0%
Rashid, Saquib	Critical Care Medicine	160	0%
Rubio, Agustin	Family Medicine	155	0%
Community Care, Kings Clinic	Unclassified	153	0%
Locke, Susan	Internal Medicine	147	0%
Lauck, Thomas	Family Medicine	145	0%
Royter, Vladimir	Neurology	144	0%
Community Care, Ke Clinic	Unclassified	141	0%

OUTPATIENT GROWTH FOCUSED ON HIGH TECH MODALITIES

Modality Focused CT & MR & PT								
Modality	2Q2012	2Q2013	YoY	Benchmark*				
СТ	1,305	1,211	-7%	-5%				
MR	1,226	1,286	5%	5%				
РТ	0	20	-	-				
Total	2531	2517	-0.6%	0.5%				



* Benchmark is based on Radisphere clients

Top 10 High Tech Orders by Specialty

		С	Т			Μ	R			P	Γ	
Specialty	2Q2012	2Q2013	YoY	BM.	2Q2012	2Q2013	YoY	BM.	2Q2012	2Q2013	YoY	BM.
Family Medicine	344	260	-24%	-20%	386	386	0%	2%	0	1	-	-
Unclassified	154	189	23%	-	206	269	31%	-	0	1	-	-
Internal Medicine	131	137	5%	5%	76	56	-26%	-7%	0	0	-	-
Hematology & Oncology	180	183	2%	-8%	8	5	-	-	0	13	-	-
Neurology	10	8	-	-	197	111	-44%	-41%	0	0	-	-
Orthopaedic Surgery	14	14	-	-	95	150	58%	50%	0	0	-	-
Specialist	82	55	-33%	-12%	37	32	-	-	0	0	-	-
Surgery	60	70	17%	19%	14	16	-	-	0	0	-	-
Sports Medicine	6	27	-	-	23	77	235%	221%	0	0	-	-
Urology	52	52	0%	-7%	4	4	-	-	0	3	-	-
Total	1033	995			1046	1106			0	18		

* YoY and BM.(Benchmark) is shown for values greater than 50 only. Benchmark is based on Radisphere clients

Top 5 Referring MD Specialty on CT & MR & PT

Modality	Referring MD	Specialty	2Q2012	2Q2013
СТ	Chatth, Bhupinder S	Hematology & Oncology	177	175
СТ	Ash, Seetharam	Urology	44	43
СТ	Csiar, Jeffrey W	Specialist	40	37
СТ	Community Care, Family He	Unclassified	30	32
СТ	Johon, Marc	Sports Medicine	6	27
MR	Varsey, Anuj	Orthopaedic Surgery	62	93
MR	Rter, Vladimir	Neurology	119	91
MR	Johon, Marc	Sports Medicine	21	58
MR	Melaenko, Kenneth	Family Medicine	36	46
MR	ai, Kenny T	Orthopaedic Surgery	20	39
PT	Chatath, Bhupinder S	Hematology & Oncology	0	12
PT	Asok, Seetharam	Urology	0	3
PT	Dectro, Jacqueline G	Family Medicine	0	1
PT	Rasd, Saquib	Critical Care Medicine	0	1
PT	Au, Alvin Y	Hepatology	0	1
Total			555	659

ED UTILIZATION

CT Stats			
Specialty	Total	Min	Max
Emergency Medicine	2,401	28	295
Unclassified	873	1	272
Nurse Practitioner	478	10	175
Family	406	118	150
Internal Medicine	295	1	180
Personal Emergency Resp	192	192	192
Occupational Medicine	159	159	159
Specialist	1	1	1
Obstetrics & Gynecology	1	1	1
Surgery	1	1	1
Family Medicine	573	1	288
Physician Assistant	98	3	95
Sports Medicine	30	8	22
Student in an Organized	10	10	10

MR Stats			
Specialty	Total	Min	Max
Internal Medicine	6	6	6
Unclassified	3	1	2
Emergency Medicine	10	1	3
Family Medicine	3	1	2

Top Referring MD For MR

Referring MD	Specialty	Volume
Mcnaton, John	Emergency Medicine	3
Mwry, George	Emergency Medicine	2
Arbula, Joaquin	Emergency Medicine	2
Bon, Scott L	Emergency Medicine	1
Dan, Richard	Emergency Medicine	1
Arne, Ikechukwu	Emergency Medicine	1

Top Referring MD For CT

Referring MD	Specialty	Volume
Tomlinson, Imamu O	Emergency Medicine	295
Aepe, Ikechukwu	Emergency Medicine	239
Bauta, Roger	Emergency Medicine	224
Kirhner, Michael N	Emergency Medicine	209
Ben, Scott L	Emergency Medicine	194
Bulrd, Timothy C	Emergency Medicine	181
Homan, Mark	Emergency Medicine	157
Bouon, Harold Michael	Emergency Medicine	126
Arbula, Joaquin	Emergency Medicine	118
Wiln, William	Emergency Medicine	109
Don, Richard	Emergency Medicine	89
Ener, David B	Emergency Medicine	88
Maughton, John	Emergency Medicine	81
Mry, George	Emergency Medicine	77
Hepoulos, Angelo	Emergency Medicine	73
Osha, Takashi	Emergency Medicine	48
Nyen, Chau H	Emergency Medicine	34
Tistle, Richard	Emergency Medicine	31
Teke, Milton R	Emergency Medicine	28

CT MR Studies

Study	СТ	MR	Total	% of CT & MR Combined Total
Brain	2,308	15	2,323	42%
Abdomen/Pelvis	1,862	0	1,862	34%
Chest	377	0	377	7%
Facial Bones	228	0	228	4%
Lumbar Spine	78	3	81	1%
Soft Tissue-Neck	62	0	62	1%

Thoracic Spine	29	0	29	1%
Pelvis	21	0	21	0%
Lower Extremities	18	1	19	0%
Orbits	15	0	15	0%
Upper Extremities	12	0	12	0%
Neck	11	0	11	0%
Knee	6	0	6	0%
Sinuses	4	0	4	0%
Temporal Bones	4	0	4	0%
Ankle	2	1	3	0%
Hip	2	1	3	0%
Internal Auditory Canals	1	0	1	0%
Gallbladder	0	1	1	0%
Hand	1	0	1	0%
Foot	1	0	1	0%
Wrist	1	0	1	0%
Lower Extremities Bilateral	1	0	1	0%
Shoulder	1	0	1	0%
Cervical Spine	460	0	460	8%
Abdomen	12	0	12	0%
Mastoids	1	0	1	0%

End to End Cycle Time						
Priority	Total	Avg Order to Scan	Avg Scan to Send	Avg Receive to Validate	Avg TAT	Total
CR	12,288	00:26	00:08	00:07	00:17	00:59
СТ	5,518	00:35	00:24	00:06	00:23	01:30
MR	22	00:55	00:59	00:08	00:34	02:37
US	2,261	00:29	00:33	00:09	00:21	01:34
Grand Total	20,089	00:29	00:15	00:07	00:19	01:12

HOSPITALIST UTILIZATION

CT Stats				MR Stats			
Specialty	Total	Min	Max	Specialty	Total	Min	Max
Internal Medicine	17	17	17	Internal Medicine	6	6	6
Hospitalist	7	7	7	Hospitalist	3	3	3
General Practice	5	5	5	General Practice	3	3	3
Community Health	3	3	3	Family Medicine	1	1	1
Family Medicine	1	1	1	Community Health	1	1	1

Top Referring MD For CT

Referring MD	Specialty	Volume
Macaranas, Dominic	Internal Medicine	17
Palav, Swapna S	Hospitalist	7
Wells, J. Darrick D	General Practice	5
Gabriel, San	Community Health	3
Verma, Yash Pal	Family Medicine	1

Top Referring MD For MR

Referring MD	Specialty	Volume
Macaranas, Dominic	Internal Medicine	6
Palav, Swapna S	Hospitalist	3
Wells, J. Darrick D	General Practice	3
Gabriel, San	Community Health	1
Verma, Yash Pal	Family Medicine	1

PT Stats

Specialty	Total	Min	Max

Top Referring MD For PT		
Referring MD	Specialty	Volume

CT MR PT Studies

Study	СТ	MR	PT	Total	% of CT, MR, PT Combined Total
Brain	10	11	0	21	45%
Chest	13	0	0	13	28%
Abdomen/Pelvis	6	0	0	6	13%
Lumbar Spine	0	3	0	3	6%
Upper Extremities	2	0	0	2	4%
Facial Bones	1	0	0	1	2%
Pelvis	1	0	0	1	2%

Source: Radisphere, 2013. Used with permission.