



Leaders in Imaging Quality, Safety and Education

NEWS



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE New Research Confirms RadSite's Impressive ROI

Garry Carneal, RadSite President & CEO

Promoting quality is a mainstay of many accreditation programs in health care. However, quantifying the linkage between quality and reducing costs can be difficult to document.



RadSite, however, is encouraged by an independent firm's recent research indicating that RadSite's Certification Program demonstrates a positive Return on Investment (ROI). In fact, the study indicates the RadSite Certification Program lowers imaging costs and utilization trends for health plans.

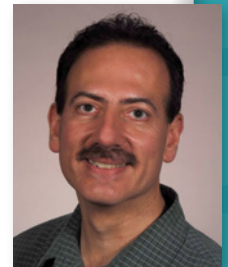
RadSite hired Trajectory® Healthcare, LLC, a consulting firm that promotes comparative effectiveness research, to develop an operational model to assess the impact of RadSite on imaging trends for a large, national health plan based on empirical methodology. The new Trajectory model

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CHIEF QUALITY OFFICER'S NOTES The Importance of Quality in Medical Imaging

Eliot Siegel, MD, RadSite Chief Quality Officer

When one considers the essential elements of best-in-class medical imaging, the old adage "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder" comes to mind. In the medical imaging industry, beauty and quality often go hand-in-hand since the practice is inherently visual in nature. While medical imaging professionals have traditionally defined the medical image as the primary source of quality assessment, a number of other elements contribute to quality, which in turn determines clinical outcomes.



Although the technology used to acquire the imaging dataset (e.g. CT scanner) is often considered the principle determinant of medical image quality, a number of additional "hidden" factors determine quality. The protocol used in image acquisition not only determines the visual quality of the imaging dataset, but also has a profound influence on patient safety as relates to radiation dose and contrast optimization.

Software applications such as image processing and advanced visualization play a major role in determining the relative conspicuity in which pathologic and normal states of anatomy can be differentiated from one another. Aesthetically pleasing images alone are no guarantee of an accurate diagnosis. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the collective efforts of the technology and medical imaging professionals to optimize safety and quality to ensure optimal health care outcomes.

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ACCREDITATION DIRECTOR RadSite's QA Accreditation Program—Something for Everyone

Bruce Reiner, MD, RadSite Director of Accreditation



Many appreciate the importance of image quality in medical image service delivery, but the collective community of medical imaging providers is often at a loss when it comes to effectively integrating proactive quality assurance (QA) into everyday practice. While medical imaging and information system technologies have undergone dramatic and fundamental advancements, QA-centric technologies have not kept pace. This is due in part to the simple fact that existing reimbursement models do not directly tie payment to quality and, as a result, there is little market demand driving QA research and development expenditures.

Along with this paucity of quality-centric technology, QA in everyday practice has paradoxically declined with the computerization of medical imaging for a number of reasons. For example, the physical layout of radiology departments has transitioned from a centralized model (with a communal area in which technologists would congregate and constructively review one another's work) to a peripheral model, where technologists often work in relative isolation from their counterparts.

At the same time, the direct communication between radiologists and technologists has become less frequent as radiologists are often located in peripheral locations, which are sometimes physically remote and inaccessible (e.g. teleradiology).

Along with these "physical changes," the role of medical economics is becoming more fundamental as demand for medical imaging services continues to escalate while reimbursement declines persist. This has resulted in a heightened emphasis on maximizing productivity and workflow, which can come at the expense of quality (often in relatively small and imperceptible ways). Although unintentional, the

end result is that quality in digital medical imaging practice has arguably suffered, and needs to be reinvigorated and reprioritized to ensure optimal health care outcomes.

The challenge for the accreditation organizations is to create programs that can reliably and consistently measure image quality.

The good news is that both medical imaging service providers and consumers are aware of these quality needs and are beginning to take action. An excellent start is the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)-mandated Medicare Improvement Patient and Protection Act (MIPPA) program that ensures more stringent quality performance standards are implemented and maintained to achieve enhanced medical imaging quality and safety. The challenge for the accreditation organizations is to create programs that can reliably and consistently measure image quality, while providing valuable educational feedback to promote continuous quality improvement. This type of symbiotic relationship cannot be accomplished through a triennial external review of image quality alone, but instead requires an ongoing collaborative relationship that analyzes the interactive effects between technology, workflow, education/training, and institutional demographics on image quality.

While these lofty goals cannot be achieved overnight, RadSite is uniquely positioned to instill positive change. As an organization, we look forward to serving the medical imaging community with the common goal of improving quality through data-driven analysis and technological innovation. ●

Dr. Bruce Reiner, RadSite's Director of Accreditation, is charged with ensuring RadSite's quality-benchmarking program conforms to current best practice standards. He is a board-certified radiologist who has published extensively on medical imaging and holds several patents related to the field of radiology.



RadSite Seeks Volunteers for Vital Committees

RadSite is looking to appoint new members to two committees central to the organization's quality benchmarking activities for diagnostic imaging—the Standards Committee and the Accreditation Committee. Founded in 2005, RadSite's Certification and Accreditation programs help assess, track and report imaging trends in an effort to enhance imaging procedures and outcomes. RadSite is most noted for developing and implementing the RadSite Assessment Program™ to evaluate the quality and operational appropriateness of imaging practices.

In recent years, RadSite has launched a number of new initiatives to expand its critical mission of assessing, tracking and reporting on imaging trends. The two volunteer-based committees were established to support these efforts. According to RadSite leadership, the diverse volunteers who serve on these committees are instrumental to carrying out the RadSite mission.

“RadSite's quality benchmarking activities incorporate key process and outcome measures, with the ultimate mission of improving image quality and reducing patient radiation dose,” says Eliot Siegel, MD, RadSite's chief quality officer. “The additional peer review by qualified third-party representatives will further enhance RadSite standards and its research activities,” he says. Dr. Siegel

also serves on RadSite's Advisory Board and is the new Chair of RadSite's Accreditation Committee.

According to Garry Carneal, JD, MA, RadSite president & CEO, “It's exciting to see the growing community of volunteers invested in promoting patient safety in the imaging arena. As part of our mission, RadSite needs input from a wide-range of stakeholders to help critique and monitor our programs.” Mr. Carneal, who has headed up RadSite for the past two years, is a nationally known expert in innovative accreditation program development.

The Accreditation Committee oversees RadSite's accreditation activities for imaging facilities and

systems. The Standards Committee oversees the development of new quality and performance programs, along with revisions to the existing standards, based on emerging best practices and new regulatory requirements.

Committee members are appointed to a one-year term, which can be renewed for additional terms. RadSite is soliciting consumer, provider, government, industry and employer representatives to serve on its committees.

Interested parties are asked to contact Judy Behm at (855) 440-6001 ext. 107 or send an email to info@radsitequality.com to learn more about its committees. Nomination letters also may be mailed to the Annapolis office at 612 Third Street, Suite 2B Annapolis, MD 21403. ●

QUALITY IN MEDICAL IMAGING

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As medical imaging continues to play a stronger role in disease prevention, surveillance and treatment, the importance of quality in medical imaging exponentially rises. Thus, medical imaging providers are faced with the following: 1) balancing the challenges of increasing volume and complexity of imaging data; 2) heightened expectations for timeliness, integrity, and security; and 3) declining reimbursements.

To ensure quality does not suffer in the midst of these challenges, RadSite is launching an exciting program that begins with technical image quality assessment and extends into uncharted territories of creating standardized quality metrics, image-centric image quality databases, and online education/training modules for continuous quality improvement. The success of these initiatives will be driven primarily by RadSite's ongoing and interactive dialogue with our medical imaging partners. We look forward to this collaboration and opportunity to reinvigorate quality in everyday medical imaging practice. ●

As RadSite's Chief Quality Officer, Dr. Eliot Siegel provides oversight of key RadSite operations. He also serves as Chair of the Accreditation Committee and was recently appointed to the RadSite Advisory Board.



RadSite Expands On-Site Audit Program

Strives to Ensure Compliance with Quality Standards

*Phillip W. Patton, PhD, CHP, DABR, ABSNM
RadSite's Director of Physics Review & On-Site Audits*

RadSite has enhanced its quality-based mission by expanding its on-site audit program. In addition to the assessment criteria provided by imaging providers as part of the application process, RadSite has ramped-up its auditing process to ensure compliance with RadSite Standards.



The enhanced on-site audit program will assess how imaging personnel are implementing their quality practices and maintaining their imaging equipment. The new system, which also serves as an educational process that promotes best practices, includes desktop audits to validate RadSite's review of imaging practices.

RadSite audits ensure the policies cited on the RadSite Assessment are carried out in day-to-day clinical practice. Auditors review the equipment, overall aspects of the site, and documentation requested in a pre-audit email. Therefore, the on-site audit process insures facilities are meeting a high quality of patient care and allows the facilities to receive expert guidance in such areas as radiation safety, quality clinical practice, and imaging protocols.

In addition to the random on-site visits, RadSite also will audit imaging providers if they are deemed out of compliance with the RadSite Assessment or Accreditation Program Standards.

RadSite offers a process that is both collaborative and educational; we encourage facilities to take advantage of the expertise these professionals bring and ask questions. With imaging becoming a more integral part of medical care—and due to the increased costs of advanced diagnostic and therapeutic interventions—RadSite is dedicated to ensuring that imaging systems are functioning properly to best meet the safety and medical needs of patients.

“RadSite was created as a solution to a problem in the health care industry,” says Cherrill

Farnsworth, RadSite's founder. “Our primary goal is to promote quality-based practices for imaging systems across the United States and its territories. To date, several of the audits have uncovered problems in how imaging providers are meeting RadSite's Standards. In most cases, corrective action plans are put into place to get the imaging provider back on track. In a few cases, imaging providers have lost their RadSite certification.”



RadSite audits ensure the policies cited on the RadSite Assessment are carried out in day-to-day clinical practice.

Providers who are quality-certified are listed on RadSite's website. The desktop and on-site audit process serves to ensure the integrity of the certification process. Most recently, RadSite has audited facilities in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Nevada, California, Ohio, and South Carolina. Each year RadSite visits hundreds of different imaging providers across the country as part of its on-site audit review program.

For more information about RadSite's audit program, visit www.radsitequality.com and click on the “Get Started” tab. ●



Follow us on LinkedIn to find out the latest news from RadSite, participate in discussions and hear about our latest safety and educational initiatives.

Keyword: RadSite

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

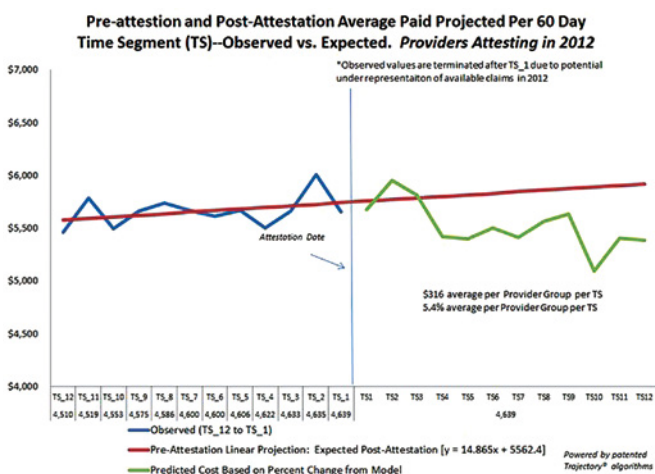
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calculates the savings based on the average amount an attested provider bills to payors for codes tied to imaging—both low-tech and high-tech.

The RadSite Certification Program provides an online assessment process for imaging providers with on-site and desktop audits to verify compliance.

Six years of claims information and other RadSite data were imported into the Trajectory engine, and a series of analyses were generated using Trajectory's patented analytic tool. The figure (below) highlights one of the outputs of the Trajectory analysis, which shows the projected impact of RadSite before and after the certification (i.e., the attestation date) for provider groups attesting in 2012. Each time period in the horizontal axis represents 60 days, covering a total of four years (i.e., two years before the certification date and two years after the certification).

The vertical axis represents average paid amounts per time period; the horizontal axis which reflects time, is centered on the date of certification (represented by the vertical line in the middle).



Time has been adjusted to allow for certifications in different months and years, and the paid amount has been adjusted for monetary inflation over the six-year period. Both these adjustments allow for valid comparisons for provider groups that attested in different calendar time periods.

The Trajectory analysis projected an average yearly ROI of “5.8 to 1” for imaging provider groups that were RadSite certified within the past two years. The various Trajectory models estimated a range of ROIs from “7.5 to 1” to “3.8 to 1” for imaging providers that were RadSite certified within the same two-year time frame. ●



Making a Difference with RadSite

This most recent ROI study further confirms the importance of RadSite's mission. We offer a multi-tiered approach to benchmarking quality and reducing unnecessary imaging. RadSite's flagship program is the RadSite Certification Program, which provides an online assessment process for imaging providers with on-site and desktop audits to verify compliance. RadSite also has developed a new Accreditation Program to help imaging providers meet the requirements of the Medicare Improvement Patient and Protection Act (MIPPA). Over the coming months, RadSite will continue to expand its activities and resources to serve patients, providers, payors, government agencies and other stakeholder groups.

Check out RadSite's website at www.radsitequality.com to download a white paper that describes this study in more detail. Please contact Garry Carneal with any questions at (855) 440-6001 or carnealg@radsitequality.com. ●

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Alice Sowinski, Manager of Standards and Research

A graduate of Lehigh University, Alice Sowinski holds bachelor's degrees in biology and psychology, as well as a minor in health, medicine, and society. She also has research experience in the area of child psychology. Recognizing Alice's brilliance, RadSite scooped her up shortly after completing her studies at Lehigh, and she quickly

and smoothly transitioned into her current role as manager of standards and research.

"Compiling innovative and complex information into a simplified summary that others can understand and learn from easily makes my role at RadSite both interesting and rewarding," says Sowinski.

"My dual role of standards and research at RadSite is also very important to make sure that the requirements we design for our programs are based on solid evidence and reflect industry best practices."

Sowinski also played an integral role in the research and creation of RadSite's *Consumer Guide to Imaging Modalities*, and a compilation of surveys on such topics as customer satisfaction, interest in new programs, attitudes on health care policy, and education.

"Working with RadSite to create new quality programs is a great opportunity to make a real impact when it comes to improving the health care industry," she says. "I hope the work I do on a daily basis will eventually trickle down to improve the lives and treatment of individual patients across the country."

Outside of the office, Alice enjoys the great outdoors, skiing, camping, hiking and spending time with her dog, Neptune. She has also traveled the world, experiencing Scotland, Ireland, Poland, and various locations in and around the Caribbean. ●



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