

Title: Raising the Bar by Going Paperless

Purpose: This presentation will explore the strategies employed in transitioning to paperless and film-less department; the challenges, costs, reimbursement issues and the economic value created.

Methods and Materials: Differential state analysis was performed using financial, time-motion and qualitative metrics to examine and evaluate the effects of establishing a fully electronic EMR paradigm for a major hospital-based RT department. Several project and change management strategies were employed to gain user and clinician acceptance, and to analyze and modify workflows to adapt to the new electronic paradigm. Evaluation and selection of a robust, adaptable and full-featured EMR, along with imaging and treatment device interfaces was done using multiple data points and clinical references.

Results: Once fully implemented, significant efficiencies and increases in productivity were measurable. Time savings and increased efficiencies in chart related activities that now allowed for distributed and simultaneous data access, and distributed image review were dramatic. Further improvements were seen in scheduling, charge capture and billing related activities. Quality measures due to improved and more comprehensive treatment documentation, along with qualitative measures relating to workplace psychology all showed improvement.

Conclusion: Although the challenges may seem daunting from a financial and project management perspective, the measurable benefits of a fully paperless and film-less department demonstrate a net positive benefit. In addition, pay-for-quality initiatives and tightening reimbursement standards will demand a level of data richness that can only be obtained from a suitable and fully utilized EMR.