

River Ranch Radiology / Sendero Imaging and Treatment Center Uses eRAD PACS to Meet Daunting Workflow Challenge by Dan Taylor eRAD, Inc.

THE CHALLENGE

River Ranch Radiology (RRR) and Sendero Imaging and Treatment Center (SITC) challenged themselves with practice management integration of two privately owned and operated, multi-site medical imaging practices. A range of group and independent radiologists provide interpretations for their seven collective imaging facilities. They also share an early model practice management system which, to contain costs, they wanted to retain. Each business had also developed their unique workflow.

So, what they needed was an easy to learn PACS that could provide image and report access wherever the radiologists might be, HL7 sophistication and flexibility, and an effective workflow accommodation and consolidation. With all this in mind, River Ranch Radiology and Sendero Imaging and Treatment Center set out to find a cost-effective digital workflow solution that could support this integration, enhance the services provided to their patients and referring physicians, and improve their overall business efficiency. They selected eRAD PACS to meet the challenge.

CONCERNS

Robert Ruiz, IT Manager, had major concerns, especially around the integration of PACS with their (early model) practice management system that was a major piece of their infrastructure. "As a seasoned "vet" in the Medical / IT world, I was very skeptical of the claims made by the eRAD sales people. They were very sure of their product and the ability of their integration team. Initially, I took it as sales hype." After Robert and the other members of the project team performed a rigorous assessment of 15 PACS vendors' products (from a narrowed list of 35), he gained confidence in the capabilities of eRAD PACS. Most of his concern centered on the HL7 interface and integration. "I honestly did not think we could achieve the level of integration we have with our current billing/scheduling system. It works better than I thought possible. eRAD PACS delivers time saving functionality that 90% of our type of practice gets from a RIS."

For a project of this magnitude to succeed, management and staff have to be dedicated. Mike Young, eRAD's Vice President of Client Services, stated, "The folks at River Ranch have given us two things that every business needs. They challenged us to provide features, functions, and support that might normally be considered beyond the scope of a PACS implementation. In addition, they also came to us with the commitment, vision, and patience to plan, implement, and support a business model that provides medical imaging services to their community that would also be considered beyond the norm."

RESULTS

According to Tara Martin, Chief Operating Officer, "The decision to implement eRAD PACS was optimal in allowing us to integrate our multi-practice and multi-site business with one consolidated digital workflow." RRR and SITC chose eRAD to provide the cutting edge in PACS to the medical community with a cost effective solution. eRAD was faced with a challenge to integrate two entities with two workflows using the same systems but different procedures effectively and efficiently. The result of eRAD's workflow solution improved RRR and SITC overall operational and clinical workflow, radiologist coverage, and referring physician acceptance.

Robert Ruiz states that managing the IT department and the integration of the PACS system has been very exciting. From integrating PACS servers and modalities to training radiologists, neurologists, technologists and number of other ISTs, he was fueled by desire to provide better, faster, and more reliable patient care. "At the end of the day, creating a homogeneous computer and modality network still gives me a great sense of accomplishment. I was so fortunate to be a part of a great PACS team. Patience and commitment are a must during the integration, but having a great vendor like eRAD has made it a huge success." Please see the overview diagram on page 3.

Nicole Tennant, Systems Development Manager, at RRR commented, "eRAD has provided excellent support from the initial integration through a recent reconfiguration to meet the never ending demands of business development for RRR and SITC. eRAD's management team continues to listen to their customer's needs in improving our workflow."

RRR and SITC's team considered every facet of their business during their vendor selection and planning and implementation of this project. Referring physicians and patients share the benefit.

Referring physicians find the eRAD PACS work lists user friendly and easy to navigate. CD burning and DICOM printing facilitate easy distribution of studies to those clinicians who choose not to become part of the digital workflow. Accordingly, the Medical Records division has been able to significantly reduce courier fees and transportation costs. Film/report turnaround time has been cut by 50%. Reporting procedures have been optimized by the use of automated batch printing to networked printers based on work list filter criteria. Expanded archive capabilities allow those report requests that do still come in from referring physicians, to be processed within minutes.

The technologists use the same system capabilities to locate and view prior images and reports when preparing to do a study. DICOM Modality Worklist eliminates the need to enter patient demographics. There is no longer a need for the front desk representatives to print daily schedules for the technical staff. Email notifications permit checks and balances for matching location and equipment with the need for specific radiologist when scheduling special procedures.

RRR and SITC's billing staff has been able to greatly reduce the amount of paper produced per patient process. Document scanning and work list configuration capabilities make it easy to securely associate patient records with imaging studies and reports and to find them for later reference.

Work lists and email notifications have also helped marketing personnel. Marketers know when referring physicians order studies as soon as they are scheduled. It is also easy to track the number and type of examinations being ordered. That allows RRR and SITC to react to and plan for the needs of the community.

Finally, as evidenced by a 25% reduction in read time, RRR and SITC radiologist productivity has increased. Customized, "learning" hanging protocols and specialized annotation tools speed diagnosis. Batch report approval and radiologist's ability to make their own report edits saves time and effort.

THE FUTURE

eRAD, Inc. and River Ranch Radiology continue their growth.

According to Roy Miller, eRAD President and CEO, "We are pleased to have a partnership with River Ranch Radiology as we continue to grow. That they have pushed us technically and operationally it is obvious. But, the River Ranch culture of attention to detail has also led to improved business practices which we have implemented during these past two years together."

Tara Martin concluded, "Building long range relationship is important to us here at River Ranch. We expect future growth in our business in terms of size and effectiveness. eRAD is a company that will help us meet the business challenges we will face along the way."

RIVER RANCH RADIOLOGY & SENDERO IMAGING AND TREATMENT CENTER

River Ranch Radiology (RRR) emerged in Austin, Texas in 1983 with one outpatient radiology clinic performing MRI and CT examinations. In 1998, Sendero Imaging and Treatment Center (SITC) opened in San Antonio, Texas. Over the past twenty-four years, they have become a multi-site imaging practice with a total of seven facilities providing a wide variety of medical imaging services with innovative technology, quality expertise, and friendly customer service.

eRAD, Inc.

eRAD, Inc. is a privately held U.S. based PACS/RIS provider which was founded in 1999. eRAD offers leading edge, scalable, web centric image management solutions. With a strong history of designing, integrating and improving workflow solutions, their capabilities include workflow analysis, project management, system customization, implementation, and a broad range of training and support options.

Utilizing "off the shelf" hardware, and standards-based open system architecture, eRAD's solutions offer an extraordinary level of functionality, security, fault tolerance and resiliency. They provide full-featured PACS, teleRADiography and data management systems with workflow solutions for hospitals, clinics, imaging centers and radiology groups. For more information about eRAD and their full product line, visit <http://www.erad.com>.

River Ranch Radiology & Sendero Imaging and Treatment Center PACS / Network Overview

Round Rock

SANC

