

Green is Green

Today's worldwide economic crisis is having a ripple effect in healthcare. According to a recent survey by Novation, a leading healthcare contracting services company in the US, 60% of responding hospitals have seen a moderate to significant impact from the economic crisis. The study reports that hospital margins are decreasing due to reduced patient volumes and endowments and increased bad debt and charity care. As a result, many hospitals are reducing capital spending, which can negatively impact profits.

In Europe, where healthcare is organized on a national level, the economic impact is less significant. While rising healthcare costs are a concern, many facilities are more worried about the energy carbon footprint.

"Energy savings is the main issue in Germany," says Verena Scholz, MD who runs a private imaging center in Braunschweig, Germany. Facilities she says, are seeking ways to lower their carbon footprint but also save operating expense at the same.

Recently, Dr. Scholz found a solution that reduces energy consumption and costs. The Signa HDe 1.5T MR was installed in October 2008 based on potential savings of \$800 EU each month. "Our savings are actually closer to \$1,000 EU each month," adds Dr. Scholz.

In fact, power measurements taken at Dr. Scholz's facility also demonstrates a significant savings for the HDe relative to another brand of MRI system that is also installed there. The savings she has realized should come as no surprise to those familiar with the HDe system. By employing efficient gradient and electronics design as well as innovative water-cooling technology, the Signa HDe is among the most energy efficient 1.5T MR systems currently commercially available, using about 41% less energy than previous generation systems. The amount of electricity saved is estimated to be about 70,000 kWh per year, equivalent to the annual electricity use of about 19 German households.

Dr. Scholz didn't have to trade quality for savings. The facility operates the HDe 12 hours each day and performs 30 to 35 exams. "Image quality is not affected since the energy savings is tied to cooling of the magnet," she says. In addition, the Signa HDe offers advanced imaging applications, such as PROPELLER, LAVA, and CartiGram.

"We are using the HDe for MSK, spine, liver, and neuro imaging," she adds, "and in fact, I prefer this system for knee exams over our other 1.5T machine from another manufacturer." ■



Dr. Verena Scholz

Verena H. Scholz, MD, is a radiologist who owns the Private Practice of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine in Braunschweig, Germany. She earned her medical degree from the Medical School of Free University, Berlin, and completed a part of her residency at Massachusetts General Hospital (Boston). Dr. Scholz interned in the Department of Neurology at the Benjamin Franklin Hospital (Berlin) and practiced at University Hospital Zurich (Switzerland) and University Hospital Grosshadern (Munich) prior to going into private practice.

