

ViewPoint enhances ultrasound efficiency and quality in the OB/GYN office

Myrtle Street OB/GYN has significantly enhanced the efficiency and quality of its ultrasound examinations by using ViewPoint, an electronic data management, reporting and archiving system from GE Healthcare. Since December 2004, the practice, in Saratoga Springs, NY, has relied on ViewPoint to manage studies performed with its GE Voluson® 730 ultrasound system. Sonographers find the system saves time, supports high-quality studies, ensures timely review of reports, and helps reduce billing errors.

Myrtle Street OB/GYN, a private women's healthcare practice with five physicians, four of whom are residency-trained in ultrasound, had 28,000 office visits in 2004 involving 7,300 patients. In a typical month, the practice's two sonographers perform 300 to 350 studies on their Voluson 730 PRO ultrasound system. Now, ViewPoint supports all of these studies replacing a less sophisticated reporting software package.

ViewPoint's key benefits include:

- Greater efficiency and quality for each patient case
- Easier physician review
- Less stress from reduced possibility of human error
- Instant access to past studies and statistical reports

Better efficiency and quality

Chief sonographer Barbara Lavoie, BSN, RDMS, reports that ViewPoint sharply reduces administrative tasks and frees up more time for patient care. She uses the system's Structured Reporting function to create quick, accurate reports for each study.

"It's much faster," says Lavoie, a sonographer for 26 years. "By noon on any given day I used to have at least half the charts from my morning exams still sitting on a desk waiting for the reports to be finished and passed on to the physician. That doesn't happen anymore. With ViewPoint, I keep up with the documentation, finishing each report while the patient is still in the room."



The reporting system, designed with extensive input from clinicians, helps Lavoie build reports quickly. The screen is uncluttered, showing only options that may be required at a given point during an exam. "The system intuitively knows what your next step is going to be," says Lavoie. "For example, if I report the absence of a gestational sac in an early pregnancy exam, a screen pops up asking for information about an ectopic pregnancy. It really streamlines the process. That's one reason reporting goes faster."

The Archive Module in ViewPoint assists Lavoie in follow-up studies: She can compare images from previous exams side by side on the screen with the current study.

"Suppose I'm doing a follow-up with a patient who has an ovarian cyst," Lavoie says. "I can line up both images in exactly the same plane. If I see a change, I know it's a real change, and not just a change in how I placed my cursor."

Streamline review

After the exam, ViewPoint makes it easier for physicians to review reports. All reports are stored in the central ViewPoint OB/GYN database, and the images are integrated electronically. "We used to print ultrasound images on thermal paper and attach them to the front of the patient's chart," Lavoie recalls. "Sometimes they got dislodged causing us to spend time hunting for images that became separated from charts."

Now, physicians review the images on a dedicated workstation at the back of the office, or on any of four other computers in the patient care areas. "The doctors love it," says Lavoie. "To say reviewing digital versus static images on thermal paper is a night and day difference would be an understatement."

Reduce the potential for human error

ViewPoint also eliminates the tedious job of tracking studies and making sure physicians review all reports in a timely manner. "Every day for 14 years I used to keep a manual log of our procedures," Lavoie says. "It was the only way we could keep track of our daily activity. Sometimes a patient would go directly from the ultrasound room to a doctor's appointment, and the chart had to follow. So, that might delay review of the ultrasound study. A medical assistant could be kept busy just checking the logbook by hand and making sure all the studies were reviewed," explains Lavoie.

"Now, we track all that with ViewPoint. On a daily basis, the physicians can look at the screen and see reports for which they are responsible. They can review the ultrasound images in the back room even if the patient's chart happens to be elsewhere. Moreover, when they sign off on a report, that activity is now recorded in ViewPoint. It makes human error less of an issue, and it frees doctors from worry about reports being missed. From a liability standpoint, no doctor wants a report sitting in the system that hasn't been signed off," says Lavoie.

Quick and easy data access

Other special features of the ViewPoint system make it easy to utilize patient and exam data. Lavoie expects the ViewPoint Archive Module to help during her next review for American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM) accreditation. "I'll have years of images stored in the computer, and I'll be able to pick out the ideal cases to submit," she says. "It will take a huge amount of time off what had been a very tedious and time-consuming process. I'm actually looking forward to the next review instead of agonizing over it the way I used to."

The ViewPoint Statistics Module allows the Myrtle Street staff to generate quick reports to review activity and measure productivity. Monthly procedure reports also help reduce billing errors.

"We can bring up the number of exams completed in a given month and compare that to the number of exams billed," Lavoie says. "If the numbers match, we know we're on track. If not, I can print out my list and the billing staff can compare that to their list. We catch any errors that way."

In general, Lavoie sees ViewPoint as a major contributor to a productive, high-quality practice. "Wasting time on paperwork and non-patient issues adds a lot of stress when you're trying to keep your numbers up," Lavoie says. "ViewPoint helps relieve that stress. I can spend more time on actual studies because I know I'll be spending less time on the back end."

For more information about how ViewPoint can enhance your efficiency, visit us on the web at www.gehealthcare.com/ultrasound, contact your GE Healthcare representative, or call 877 644 3114.

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