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13th Annual Management in Medical Imaging (MIR) Scientific Meeting

The 13th Annual Scientific Meeting of Management in Radiology (MIR), a professional meeting bringing together chairmen, managers and business administrators of medical imaging departments worldwide, took place in Palma, Mallorca from 14 – 15 October, 2010.

The official business and management assembly for leaders in diagnostic imaging, the MIR meeting once again drew an impressive line-up of top speakers to present and debate their common professional challenges as well as their solutions particular to the medical imaging department.

Workflow and Image Management

This year's meeting kicked off with a discussion of the optimal processing and management of images and related data, centering on the explosion of volumes of data since the transition to digital imaging. The cost-effectiveness and utility of current data management methods was heavily discussed during a pre-congress Wednesday workshop on image compression, which drew some of the leading experts in the field to come together. Thus, the opening session highlighted some of the main challenges discussed during this hot topic meeting.

David Koff (Canada) began with a look at image compression issues, summarising and reviewing the Canadian medical imaging community's stance on image compression as a means of managing data. As a large country, Canada is reliant on large volumes of bandwidth for fast image and data transfer – one way they found to manage this better is to use lossy compression, where non-relevant data are discarded. Importantly, Prof. Koff shared the results of a legal analysis that was made on the use of compression, which set some ground rules for its appropriate use. For example, it was decided that radiologists ought to use lossy compression in primary reading to avoid recalls after reporting. Discussions following this session revealed vendors need to do more to provide tailored and integrated PACS systems for the use of lossy compression. Lawrence Sutton (UK) continued with a discussion of how long images need to be kept asking the audience: "What do we want our images for, and what would we like to do with them? How can we share our data?"

Regrettable Management Decision Forum

A recurring theme in the MIR congress during previous editions is an interactive discussion involving a key group of speakers that explores best practice guidelines for managers ("The 10 Commandments of Medical Imaging Management", Oxford/2008 and "The Best Management Decision I Made in my Department", Riga/2010). This year proved no different, with a look at "The Management Decision I Most Regret and Why".

This session explored lessons learned from making missteps and from missed opportunities and provided the opportunity for intense solution-focused debate following the session between audience members and speakers. Addressing gripes was a key focus for speaker Prof. Stephen Baker (U.S.) who followed an earlier entertaining talk on "How to Win Every Argument" with a discussion about how hiring dysfunctional employees can have a welter of negative consequences for the department – disrupting morale and even resulting in litigation. The moral of the story was that the need to investigate a potential employee fully before hiring is paramount, with the additional lessons to build the department from within, and to "hire a workhorse, not a show horse". This session provoked much response from the audience, many of whom stated that for example, in the UK, one can't ask about a candidate's background. Also, in the UK another issue is that the chairman of the medical imaging department does not have the luxury of terminating the contracts of uncooperative or unproductive employees. In general, attendees found the subsequent discussion on dealing with resistant and subversive employees and alternative strategies for their management, to be highly useful.

Prof. Michel Claudon (France) then discussed the necessity of proper evaluation prior to starting a new project: Checking out not only the local consequences for a large-scale regional project, but ensuring that the enthusiasm of other project leaders is not due to the kind of advantage that would influence their motivation for getting involved. The lesson learned was that as the responsibility for initiating new projects stops with the project leader, it's important to be as informed as possible. Prof. Luis Donoso (Spain) then spoke about the usefulness of regret – stating that if we can anticipate the regret we can improve our decision-making process. A few of the areas of regret he touched on included delays in action, trying to work an organisational structure that is not consistent with the current organisation, not showing enough commitment to strengthening the role of radiographers, and not involving others in management decisions enough.

Friday's Sessions

Friday's sessions began by addressing management issues in radiation protection, with a line-up of three speakers discussing issues such as management of radiation protection in fluoroscopy imaging, the impact of responsible authorities on the medical imaging department, and imaging guidelines in pregnancy – defining the department's policy. It followed up with a session on teleradiology, a recurrent theme for the congress as it strives to keep attendees updated on the latest facets of this ongoing debate, particularly in the field of legal issues and new trends. Finally, the meeting concluded with a look at the management issues faced by medical imaging managers and chairmen in the host country, this year Spain. A presentation by the Spanish Society of Management and Quality in Medical Imaging summarised the achievements made by this association, and followed with a focus on the IT management issues particular to Spain. All in all, the congress was received very

positively by attendees, who state that its practical usefulness is invaluable. Interviews with attendees and speakers, photos and session highlights will be made available on the www.imagingmanagement.org website.

More information is available at www.mir-online.org.

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