
Efficiency Gains in Cancer Care:Dutch Pathology Department is The First in The World to Go Digital



Pathologists at University Hospital Utrecht (UMC Utrecht) in the Netherlands have become among the first in the world to review histology cases for primary diagnostics digitally. The completely paper- and glass slide-free pathology review workflow, enabled by [Sectra Pathology PACS](#), provides the pathologists with access to both digital pathology and radiology images as well as patient information from a single workstation. This significantly increases workflow efficiency and enables enhanced collaboration between pathologists and radiologists at the hospital, which in turn reduces lead times and increases efficiency in cancer care.

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Sectra Pathology PACS is tightly integrated both with the LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) used at UMC Utrecht and with a pathology laboratory application (PALGA) within the nationwide network and registry of histopathology and cytopathology in the Netherlands. This enables full access to lab data, requests, patient information and digital pathology images, and allows the pathologists to work completely digitally when performing primary diagnostics, thereby increasing reading efficiency.

“With the digitization of pathology and the use of it in primary diagnostics we are able to work in a more efficient way. The MDT meetings are prepared and supported with digital pathology images and, like with radiology in the past, by making the information simply available to other specialties we can collaborate in a better way and therefore improve the quality of the healthcare pathway for the patient,” says Professor Paul van Diest, head of the Pathology Department at UMC Utrecht.

Sectra’s pathology PACS builds on the same infrastructure as Sectra’s solution for handling radiology images (Sectra radiology PACS), which is already used at the radiology department at UMC Utrecht. This enables in-depth cooperation between radiologists and pathologists, two of the key functions in effective cancer care. For example, with joint access to radiology and pathology images, the hospital’s multidisciplinary rounds have become more effective.

The pathology department at UMC Utrecht employs about 14 pathologists and 14 residents, and handles approximately 30,000 histopathological and 300 autopsy requests per year. Almost all of the histopathological slides, about 200,000 slides per year, are scanned and stored digitally.

Digitization of primary diagnostics in pathology to benefit cancer care

Sectra provides a complete solution for primary diagnostics. The solution includes archiving and storage solutions together with high-end review workstations. It allows pathologists to make their diagnoses and reports with higher precision and less time spent per case. Sectra’s solution for digital pathology is built on the same platform as the company’s radiology PACS, the solution for managing radiology images. With a shared technical platform, images from both of the diagnostic specialties can be stored and displayed in a single system. This enables deeper cooperation between radiologists and pathologists and facilitates, for example, multidisciplinary rounds, which is a step in integrated diagnostics.

Although European pathology departments are in the process of digitizing their work, only a few hospitals have implemented full-scale digital pathology solutions. In the US, digital pathology for primary diagnostics is still pending FDA approval.

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