

RSNA Image Share Enrolls First Patients



RSNA Image Share, the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) network designed to help patients take control of their medical images and reports, has entered into clinical practice. The network will facilitate access to imaging exams for patients and physicians, potentially reducing unnecessary examinations, minimizing patient radiation exposure and enabling better informed medical decisions.

The project was launched in 2009 through a \$4.7 million contract with the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB) to build a secure, patient-centric medical imaging sharing network based on common open-standards architecture that would enable patients to control access to their information through personal health records (PHR) without relying on CDs.

"The idea of RSNA Image Share is to improve quality, safety and efficiency while engaging patients and families in their own care," said the project's chief investigator David S. Mendelson, M.D., chief of clinical informatics at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City and member of the RSNA Radiology Informatics Committee. "We are letting patients know the network is available and inviting them to sign up if interested."

RSNA is overseeing development of the Internet-based network for sharing images and reports at five pilot institutions. Mount Sinai is the first to begin accepting patients. The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., University of California – San Francisco, University of Chicago Medical Center, and University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore will begin enrolling patients in the near future.

Participating sites will also educate patients on establishing PHR accounts with selected providers that will enable patients to retrieve, view, archive and share medical images, reports and other medical documents, creating a detailed medical history accessible through any secure Internet connection.

To ensure patient privacy, the project was modeled on the type of security systems used by banks. Patients are given an eight-digit code and then create a password or PIN known only to them.

After signing into the network, patients follow a series of steps that tell a component of the system, called the Edge Transport Server, to retrieve their reports and images. From a "jacket" of imaging records, patients can select those they would like to share with their healthcare team.

"There is a 72-hour delay intentionally built into the process to ensure that the patient's physician sees new imaging results before the patient does, enabling the doctor to be prepared to have a discussion with the patient," Dr. Mendelson said.

In coming years, project investigators will work on developing direct transfer of images for immediate accessibility—necessary, for example, if a patient is flown into a trauma center from another facility.

RSNA Image Share is a profile of Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE®), an initiative among medical leaders, software developers, medical societies and vendors to improve communication among healthcare equipment, systems and software. The goal is to move closer to a universal electronic health record (EHR) and help physicians meet federal meaningful use requirements in practice.

An IHE Image Sharing Demonstration featuring systems and vendors used in the network will take place at the RSNA 97th Scientific Assembly and Annual Meeting to be held in Chicago beginning November 27, 2011.

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