
Syngo.via and Syngo.plaza from Siemens

The MR, Nuclear Medicine and PET/CT Center in Bremen Mitte, Germany started using the advanced visualization software syngo.via in 2009 and the new PACS syngo.plaza in 2010. For users, the major benefits of the integrated Siemens solution are the time savings and the improved quality.

The limiting resource for a radiology practice is the radiologist him- or herself. As a result, the most important thing is to lighten the radiologist's load if you want to increase the efficiency of the practice," says Markus Lentschig, M.D. Together with two other radiologists, he runs the MR, Nuclear Medicine and PET/CT Center in Bremen Mitte on the Bremen Mitte Clinic campus. With three MRI machines (MAGNETOM Espree, MAGNETOM Avanto, MAGNETOM Verio) and a PET/CT (Biograph 6), Lentschig and his colleagues cover the entire examination spectrum of a radiology practice.

Markus Lentschig first implemented the syngo.via imaging software as a Siemens development partner in early 2009, and from that point on he continued to contribute with his ideas to further optimize the system. A year and a half later, he installed syngo.plaza, the first Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS) from Siemens, which combines 2-D, 3-D and 4-D diagnostics in one workplace.

"Efficiency and quality"

Why syngo.via and syngo.plaza? Markus Lentschig's answer is short and sweet: "Efficiency and quality." The practice sees approximately 20,000 patients every year – an enormous volume for radiology technicians and radiologists, which increases the need for time-saving support. Every minute spent finding and preparing images is a minute taken away from making a diagnosis, and keeps the radiologists from doing their real work. On the one hand, every radiology office needs a stable PACS that can provide images quickly; this gives the radiologist timely diagnostic tools and intelligent support in order to cut down on time-consuming routine tasks. On the other hand, the office also needs highly efficient diagnostic software. "The combination of syngo.plaza and syngo.via offers both – and with a largely identical user interface," says Lentschig. As someone who uses both programs, Lentschig prefers to carry out diagnoses in syngo.via. Other radiologists work mostly with the syngo.plaza PACS and only rely on the diagnostic software for special cases.

A head examination, for example, shows exactly what is meant by efficiency and quality. The exam procedure varies depending on whether the patient is complaining of pain, getting follow-up care for a tumor or for a stroke. The images are called up from syngo.via; any details that are irrelevant for the current diagnosis are automatically removed. The radiologist does not need to process a confusing pile of images first in order to take indicationspecific measurements and study the images. The principle behind this workflow involves highlighting the important information and eliminating things that are secondary. This saves time and frees the radiologist from tedious routine work.

In addition, the screen layout for syngo.via and syngo.plaza can be customized according to the doctor's personal preferences and the examination requirements. For most of the examinations, Markus Lentschig has created predefined layouts that his colleagues in the practice can adopt or reconfigure according to their preferences. For head exams, the stroke layout opens automatically because strokes are the most common reason for an exam. If another kind of head exam is required, the radiologist clicks over to the corresponding predefined layout. If needed, the "Patient Jacket" functionality can display all of the previous and new examination results side by side.

Finding and retrieving

But which images do you want to see, and how many? "A decade and a half ago, a stomach exam gave us a hundred and fifty images. Today, a normal exam produces two thousand, sometimes even twice that many. There's no way I can look at them each individually," says Lentschig, pointing out a constantly growing dilemma for radiologists: for the greatest possible diagnostic quality, you need as many images as possible – but the flood of images is overwhelming for radiologists. Intelligent selection mechanisms that help them focus on the most important frames can only be a benefit.

The key term here: Findings Navigator. This tool in syngo.plaza and syngo.via can highlight areas and automatically save them to a list so that they can be called up again with a simple mouse click. "When I show my findings to a colleague, I don't need to scroll through the entire series," says Lentschig, praising the user-friendly feature that makes it easier to share the images internally, especially when obtaining a second diagnosis. "The time that my colleagues and I used to spend searching can now be spent on the diagnosis." This is aided by another application that is also available in both syngo programs: the 3-D reference point. With this function, the radiologist can highlight a point on an image that will then automatically be displayed on every level.

Integration of PACS and diagnostic software

Historically, diagnostic software and PACS were two separate systems. In the meantime, the syngo philosophy has already allowed Siemens to come very close to creating a uniform user interface with identical functions, as Lentschig confirms: "Anyone who is familiar with syngo.via can use syngo.plaza, too." As an integrated provider in the public health sector, Siemens combines the elements that belong together – imaging modalities, diagnostic software and PACS. But integration is a relative concept, and every development in this direction calls for the next step. "The combination of syngo.via and syngo.plaza makes this system one-of-a-kind," says Lentschig, emphasizing the value of his diagnostic and PACS solution. "Every integration improvement puts the existing solution farther and farther ahead of the competition." New technical possibilities inspire further desires in the users. A current example of this can be seen with the web applications and availability on mobile devices, which many radiologists have embraced with open arms.

Key concept: Web Options*

In addition to syngo.via and syngo.plaza, Siemens soon will provide the option to view diagnostic reports and images via a secure internet connection. This will allow the referring doctor to view the patient's images on the screen even before the CD is sent over from the radiology practice, which improves coordination between the medical offices and increases loyalty to the referring doctor. The simplified communication also supports exchanges between radiologists when they need to get a second opinion. "It gives me more personal freedom because I then can communicate with the practice from home or even look at the images on my iPad while I'm on the road," says Markus Lentschig. "Especially when it comes to iPad use, Siemens demonstrates that this company is driving technical progress with its innovations, while simultaneously keeping up with current trends." So are syngo.via and syngo.plaza an investment in the future? "Absolutely!"

www.siemens.com/syngo.via www.siemens.com/syngo.plaza

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