

Excuse Me, Are You a PACS Administrator?

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The lofty goal of achieving a film-less imaging department has long since been realized with advances in technology, the amalgamation of the Picture Archival and Communication System (PACS) into the modern radiology department is no longer an argument of necessity but rather, a decision of 'when'.

Benefits long touted by vendors in the past have since become a set of basic requirements that one will expect with any PACS implementation, however, some institutes have also realized that merely 'putting in a few computers and removing the light boxes' don't necessary improve operational workflow nor increases the productivity of the radiology department.

While some ponder on what went wrong and start pointing fingers at the implementation team or at the vendors who sold them the PACS, others took the step forward to investigate the problem, these individuals are usually the PACS Administrators, either formally appointed with the relevant title or not.

IT versus Radiography

PACS Administrators comes in many forms, some of them are IT Professionals and some - Radiographers. There exists an age long debate on 'who' most suit the bill with PACS being an IT solution that requires that understanding of radiology workflow in order to be effective.

PACS Administration is a hybrid profession where neither IT Professionals nor Radiographers will be able to handle entirely on their own as it deals with technology and how it fits in with workflow and imaging. PACS administration is not a one person job but instead, the collaborative effort of several different skill-sets.

“PACS Administration deals with technology and how it fits in with workflow and imaging”

Definition of PACS Administrator

Most individuals fail to realize is that not all IT professionals are made the same. There exist several types of IT Professionals, from infrastructure engineers to application programmers to systems analysts etc etc. Similarly, Radiographers comes in different flavors, from General X-ray to CT, MRI, Angiography and Mammography (amid other clinical specialty).

While the actual duties required of the PACS Administrator vary according to the needs of each facility, the typical list includes (but not limited to);

- Day-to-day operation/maintenance of PACS
- Storage media and Network management;
- User management (operation as well as administrative)
- Trouble-shooting and problem solving;

- Training for new and ongoing users;
- Security, including development and monitoring of policies and procedures;
- Proactive technical administration, planning, coordination, documentation

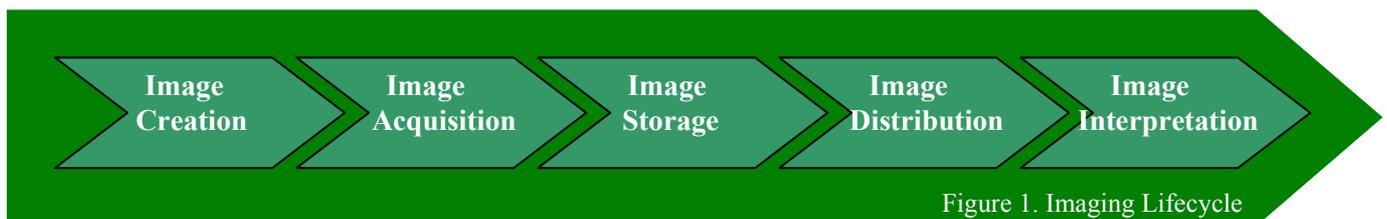
Other than Radiology

With the advent of film-less imaging, other medical disciplines like Cardiology, Orthopedics, Ophthalmology, Endoscopy, and even Dental are seeking to adopting PACS into their own workflow in a bid to enjoy the benefits that are inherent in a successful PACS deployment.

The possibility are open up to all medical disciplines that utilizes medical imaging to aid diagnosis as long as someone (be it a vendor or not) is willing to develop the appropriate solution.

Medical Imaging Informatics

The introduction of PACS in medical disciplines other than Radiology has spark the progression of Radiology Informatics into Medical Imaging Informatics, dealing with the entire information lifecycle serving as the link between imaging and other medical disciplines.



An indicative milestone for the Medical Imaging Informatics profession in 2006 when the Society for Computer Applications in Radiology (SCAR) renamed itself to Society for Imaging Informatics in Medicine (SIIMS) in order to better reflect the broadened role of imaging across the medical enterprise.

Advocating to advancing computer applications and information technology in medical imaging through education and research, the goals of SCAR/SIIMS remained the same. In fact, PACS Administrators with radiology workflow and enterprise distribution experience are highly valuable resources in implementing non radiology PACS such as Cardiology as the experience and similarity between the disciplines aids tremendously during the implementation process.

Upholding Professionalism

With such diversified background existing among PACS administrators, it is important that an avenue exist to allow the gathering of these professionals for networking, sharing of experiences and best practices to ease the implementation of film-less technology in healthcare can take place.

With Imaging Informatics still in its infancy stage, it may prudent to have Medical Imaging Informatics classified as a branch off the local Radiographer's society. While one might argue that Imaging Informatics is not a modality and that it spans across the several medical disciplines, however, majority of the existing PACS Administrators currently manages a Radiology PACS.

The professional path of a PACS Administrator is exciting, let's make the journey worthwhile.

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