Mobilizing the Standard of Care

Alliance HealthCare Services is the first provider to deploy the Biograph mCT Flow™ PET/CT scanner in mobile units. Rich Jones, President of Alliance HealthCare Radiology, and Dale Hockel, Chief Operating Officer, talk about their experience.

By Martin Suter
How big is your market share?

Rich Jones: We perform about ten percent of all PET/CT procedures in the US. We run a fleet of about 150 PET/CT units and operate twelve fixed PET/CT sites.

Are there any industry-wide trends pushing mobile solutions?

Rich Jones: A mobile solution aligns with many pressures hospitals face these days. Mobile solutions allow the hospital to offer their patients imaging exams in a timely and cost-effective manner, balanced with careful capital expenditure management.

What payment structures do you offer your customers?

Rich Jones: Payment structures can be fee-per-procedure, a monthly rate, a daily rate or even a joint venture arrangement. It all depends on the strategic needs of the hospital.

Logistically, what is the best use of the trucks?

Rich Jones: Trucks are assigned specific routes to go from one hospital to the next. They typically move at night and are set up and ready for the next day of service. Most of our mobile units are busy five to six days a week.

Do technologists travel with the trucks?

Rich Jones: Our technologists are based in the area where the service is provided. We ensure that we have the right technologist with the right license and experience to serve our clients.

Does access to the latest technology keep technologists at Alliance HealthCare Radiology?

Dale Hockel: Technologists are always interested in working with the latest technology. So that does help us from a recruiting standpoint. Shorter scan times allow technologists to move patients through quickly and avoid backlog, which is always a challenge in a large system.

How many mobile Biograph mCT Flow units does Alliance HealthCare Radiology have?

Rich Jones: Over the last quarter, we put four Biograph mCT Flow units into operation. We have another three on order that will be in operation by June 2016. So we will have seven Biograph mCT Flow trucks in operation with our large IDN clients. As far as I know, we are the only company currently using this system in a mobile capacity (March 2016).

What advantages are there to mobilizing Biograph mCT Flow?

Dale Hockel: Standardization of care was critical, especially for our IDN clients with multiple locations. Other reasons include patient comfort and controlling the dose of the radioactive tracers. Biograph mCT Flow offers low-dose options, which is where the market is headed. And the technology has been significantly easier for our technologists to use.

How would you describe your experience with Biograph mCT Flow so far?

Rich Jones: The feedback has been extremely positive from our clients as well as from our technologists using...
Three Ways Hospitals Incorporate Mobile PET/CT Services

As consolidation continues to take place, healthcare providers are incorporating mobile scanners to deliver cost-efficient, high-quality care across the entire network. In the experience of Alliance HealthCare Radiology, here are three benefits to using mobile PET/CT services.

Integrate new technology
Test the market with the latest technology to develop new services without a significant investment.

Operate based on true consumption
Provide operational capacities that meet the needs of a location’s patient volume.

Provide standardized care
Balance the need to achieve a reliable, consistent level of quality patient outcomes with careful capital expenditure across the network.
the equipment. Patients appreciate the fast scan times. PET/CT patients often go through a very stressful time obtaining their diagnosis. It helps minimize the time required for imaging. The bore size is large, making exams easy for larger or bariatric patients.

What about the clinical feedback?

Rich Jones: From a clinical standpoint, we have seen increased accuracy compared to older imaging technologies with the high resolution feature. From an operational perspective, we have seen a significant improvement in scan time and image uniformity, compared to conventional step-and-shoot methods. Our technical teams are extremely happy with the exam quality.

How have the new trucks impacted the general perception of mobile scanners?

Dale Hockel: Historically, people have viewed mobile MRI and mobile PET/CT as lower-end services. Biograph mCT Flow, with the quality and the patient satisfaction that comes from that technology, will help us improve the perception.

How do you make mobile scanners more inviting for patients?

Rich Jones: We work with the hospital to ensure the surroundings are as calming as possible. Our teams do a phenomenal job of making the patients comfortable. As a company, we do patient surveys, and patient satisfaction runs at about 95 percent across the board nationally.

Healthcare consolidation is a big trend. How does this impact Alliance HealthCare Radiology?

Rich Jones: I think it has a positive impact. We currently operate in 45 states, and we provide a wide variety of services. Hospitals that consolidate can turn to us for solutions for their whole network, whether it is fixed multi-modality centers, mobile PET/CT, mobile MRI or even leasing an asset. For us, consolidation is an opportunity to do a good job for all these systems.

As organizations grow larger, do they consider providing these services themselves?

Rich Jones: We work with customers to take that on for them, because we have the infrastructure to do that. We can show that Alliance HealthCare Radiology can bring a lower cost-per-interaction than hospitals can do themselves, whether it is mobile or fixed. In particular, Biograph mCT Flow, if used correctly, ends up being a cost reducer.

* Biograph mCT Flow is not commercially available in all countries. Due to regulatory reasons its future availability cannot be guaranteed. Please contact your local Siemens organization for further details.

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The statements by Siemens customers described herein are based on results that were achieved in the customer’s unique setting. Since there is no “typical” hospital and many variables exist (e.g., hospital size, case mix, level of IT adoption), there can be no guarantee that other customers will achieve the same results.