Using lifeIMAGE OutBox™ to Deliver Images and Results Electronically, in a Clinically Relevant Timeframe

The Problem

Weill Cornell Imaging at NewYork Presbyterian is a growing, state-of-the-art practice in a competitive imaging market. It has five locations that provide a full array of diagnostic imaging services. Its primary mission is to provide high value care and a high level of service to patients and referring physicians.

The practice has over fifty full-time clinicians with expertise in all areas of diagnostic radiology. It staffs highly trained technologists, as well as a strong marketing team of Radiology Service Liaisons who manage relationships with its referring community.

WCINYP has adopted a variety of innovative technologies to streamline its operations. But, its image and results distribution process needed improvement - getting results to referrers without access to its parent institutions’ electronic health records was cumbersome. To share results with these physicians, a clerk would have to reference the practice’s “preferences bible” – a manually updated list of the ways referrers preferred to receive results. Options included faxing a report, or delivering a hardcopy report by courier or mail (with or without images).

As the practice expanded, it became more challenging to deliver results in its committed turn-around time, and within a reasonable budget. In contrast to the rest of WCINYP’s message of superior clinical and customer service, its method of distributing results was not a strong business differentiator.

“The ability to provide images and interpretations to our referring clinicians in a clinically relevant and customer friendly timeframe is critical to the success of our imaging practice. OutBox is an essential component of our business plan.”

Dr. Keith Hentel
Vice Chairman for Clinical Operations, WCINYP

The Solution

WCINYP had lifeIMAGE in place for ingesting outside CDs and added lifeIMAGE OutBox to improve how it shared images and reports with its referring physicians.

With OutBox, imaging providers can give referring physicians, on-call doctors, clinical trial investigators, and patients, instant, electronic access to images and reports.
Results can be published on-demand through an ad-hoc query/retrieve of PACS, or in an automated fashion, by leveraging an on-site lifeIMAGE app that takes in HL7 feeds, matches them to distribution rules, and auto-publishes exams to recipients via the network. The configuration and testing of the automated approach can be implemented in just a few weeks, and can scale to become a practice’s results distribution engine for all imaging. OutBox includes iPhone and iPad apps so physicians who receive exams can view them on their mobile device.

WCINYP was a beta site for the automated results distribution service. In the meantime, it began using the ad-hoc publishing tools of OutBox to share results with a pilot group of referring physicians. Rather than distributing results according to the “preferences bible,” a medical record clerk uses the lifeIMAGE Sending App (LISA) to query / retrieve a study from PACS, attach the report in PDF format, and instantly share both to a cloud account, after which time to referring physician is notified that they have new results available.

With the ad-hoc service in place, WCINYP’s physician liaison team began to market its enhanced delivery service with current and potential referring physicians. As they visited physician practices, they used their iPads to demonstrate receiving results and viewing exams electronically.

“Not only has Outbox become a vital part of the practices that myself and the other radiology service liaisons visit but it has also provided us the opportunity to visit new practices outside of our primary geographical area and be able to offer them the same level of service as a physician in the same building as our practice,” said Sharada Das, MPH, Marketing Manager at WCINYP.

Meanwhile, WCINYP implemented the automated results distribution service, so it could scale OutBox to meet the increasing demand of referring physicians. It configured and tested its HL7 feed of ADT, order and report messages to LILA, built its rules for auto-publishing exams from PACS and LILA to OutBox, and began a pilot project with a few WCINYP interventional radiologists.

With automated distribution in place, after liaisons engage physicians to receive results electronically, the medical records IT staff simply builds a publishing rule for the physician and their practice. From then on, images and reports are automatically sent to the cloud. Clerks perform a simple quality-check step to validate exams before they are released. They can also attach non-DICOM clinical information, if needed.

The Results

WCINYP now reliably and rapidly communicates both reports and images to referring physicians. While it used to take days for referring physicians to receive results – they now get them within hours of report finalization. Timeliness and electronic access have facilitated a new degree of collaboration between the practice’s radiologists and referrers, even those without access to the EHR.

“lifeIMAGE has revolutionized our business model allowing us to provide referring physicians with reliable access to their patients’ information as soon as it is available, no matter where they practice,” said Tom Stokes, CFO/COO at WCINYP. “The level of service is increased without the expensive investment in human resources to achieve such. Quality is improved and costs are contained increasing the value that we provide both our patients and referring doctors.”

Mobile access has been a significant win for WCINYP, as well. Referrers appreciate they can act on reports regardless of where they are as soon as the results are available (so long as they have their iPads). The practice’s marketing team has been able to parlay this into greater demand for the practice’s imaging services. They can easily demonstrate an appealing, clinically useful service to new physicians.

“The ability to provide images and interpretations to our referring clinicians in a clinically relevant and customer friendly timeframe is critical to the success of our imaging practice. OutBox is an essential component of our business plan, enabling our practice to deliver and track the receipt of images/reports as they are available to any referring or consulting physician no matter where they practice,” said Dr. Hentel.

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Tom Stokes
CFO/COO, WCINYP

lifeIMAGE allows patients, physicians and hospitals to electronically exchange diagnostic imaging records from any facility. With lifeIMAGE, you save time and resources – ultimately providing better outcomes for patients.

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