
Radiology results reporting must not distract from image interpretation

(April 30, 2006) - Contributed by Jason Litchfield

Although radiology results reporting has changed very little, PACS and other technologies have changed the speed and efficiency with which information can be stored and shared, said David L. Weiss, MD, during the Communicating Results special session.

Although radiology results reporting has changed very little in over a century of use, PACS and other technologies have changed the speed and efficiency with which information can be stored and shared, said David L. Weiss, MD, Clinical Section Head, Imaging Informatics, Geisinger Health System, director of radiology, Geisinger Medical Center, during the Communicating Results special session at the annual meeting of the Society for Imaging Informatics in Medicine (SIIM, formerly SCAR) in Austin, Texas yesterday.

Because of digital image acquisition and PACS, radiologists are expected to immediately receive and interpret images. The use of speech recognition and/or structured reporting do not necessarily speed up reporting as one might assume. However, gains in reporting speed have the potential to be found in effective reporting systems that streamline workflow and allow radiologists to focus on images as well as promote bi-directional communication so that radiologists and clinicians can share information easily, said Weiss.

Several tools exist that can help accomplish good communication, Weiss said, such as:

- Physician order entry support – prevents inappropriate studies from being ordered and performed based on criteria that guide orders;
- Automation of data entry – this software uses macros and templates that are able to automatically populate themselves with information using RIS criteria to speed reporting;
- Integrated real-time decision support – this type of tool should ideally provide access to personal notes, teaching files and other information integrated right into the interpretation process;
- Ideal results communication – this process, Weiss believes, should be part of the reporting process and should “minimize radiologist time and distraction” by using natural language processes that categorize reports; and
- Multimedia reporting – these include annotated images with descriptive texts that have hyperlinked words or phrases that take users to a thumbnail within the report.

Whatever tools are used, Weiss said, the end goal is to reduce the parts of the process that take away from a radiologist doing what they are there for which is interpreting images.

To hear an excerpt of Dr. Weiss in his own words, [click here](#).