

Summit Radiology is a 39 physician group based in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. As of mid 2010, they provide interpretive services for 15 hospitals and 15+ clinics and imaging centers. They implemented TeleRIS in 2009, along with a new central PACS and dictation system.

Their goals for the system were:

1. Increased radiologist efficiency
2. Provide high quality sub-specialty services
3. Enable growth without linear costs

According to Ian Gass, CIO, “We had become victims of our own success, in a sense. As we added more contracts we also had to add staff and systems to allow our radiologists to read. What this meant, in reality, is that we had reached a point where growth wasn’t worth it anymore – we couldn’t reach our profit goals with that model. In addition, we had problems getting orders to the right doctors, as well as fully utilizing on site radiologists.”

Summit’s model is to place radiologists at their client’s sites, which provides a high level of service and interaction with their client’s physicians. “That was the positive,” according to Mr. Gass. The problems it created were multiple worklists for the doctors to monitor, multiple workstations to read from, order prioritization issues and very unbalanced workloads.

Ian states that the impact of TeleRIS was immediate; “With the efficiencies gained we’ve been able to combine 2 of our rotations into 1, eliminating the need to hire additional radiologists to keep up with current growth. This is very exciting as we are still expanding.”

“Prior to ThinAir, our radiologists and support staff were having to watch multiple PACS worklists, waiting for stat cases to pop up and hoping they were noticed it in a timely manner. We also had problems where lower priority cases would often go overlooked for extended periods of time until a physician’s office called looking for the report. With the “global” worklist we have with ThinAir, and its ability to track a report’s required turn around time, we know immediately when stat cases arrive and we’ve all but eliminated the problem of cases becoming stagnant.

Additionally ThinAir has also allowed us to fully utilize our sub-specialty trained radiologists, even if they’re working from our Hawaii location. Previously we would run into situations where a sub-specialty radiologist was unavailable to the rest of the system because they were reading in a location not connected – our most valuable resource was, in reality, isolated.

With the TeleRIS assignment engine, we know what each radiologist’s RVU workload is at all times and the system automatically assigns orders to the correct doctors. It also keeps track of each order’s contracted turnaround time and sends alerts when orders start aging. An added benefit of TeleRIS is its ability to ‘know’ where each order came from and launch the appropriate PACS viewer for each study. This is very important to us because our physicians read local studies on the site’s PACS and remote studies from our central PACS viewer; but we need all the reports and other data in our TeleRIS system. This is all automatic with the ThinAir Data system.”