

Imaging Associates



Imaging Associates embraces Lexmark NilRead Enterprise Viewer for improved patient care and service to referring physicians

Challenge

Embedded PACS/RIS viewer lacks desired functionality

Imaging Associates implemented a new PACS/RIS solution in April 2014 to serve as the company's core information system for managing medical images, reports and other outpatient data. Radiologists found the image viewer that came with the new system to be less-than-comprehensive in its feature set. They also felt the viewer was not intuitive to use. The primary reason for the viewer's unpopularity, however, was due to lengthy wait times experienced by referring physicians while downloading images for viewing. These delays were frustrating, resulting in a loss of physician productivity and responsiveness to patients.

"We evaluated a number of different viewers in our search for an enterprise solution," says Ward Hinger, CEO, Imaging Associates. "There are a lot of viewer products on the market today that claim to be 'zero-footprint.' Many of them, however, have difficulty working with various browser versions and still require downloads and add-ons in order to work properly." Viewers that require extra steps to function properly can cost a busy physician precious time when making treatment decisions for patients.

Solution

Zero-footprint viewer provides versatility, improved collaboration

Physicians need flexibility and a variety of technology platform options, including mobile devices, when accessing patient information. "When we looked at the Lexmark NilRead Enterprise Viewer, it was refreshing to find that it is a true zero-footprint viewer that can be accessed from anywhere in the world, from any platform, including smartphones, tablets and PCs," says Hinger. "It provides a rich view of a patient's medical history, including reports and images."

Hinger and his team liked that NilRead can identify and ingest images from virtually any departmental archiving solution, and display a wide variety of image types, both DICOM and non-DICOM, including TIFF, SVS, GIF, JPEG, PDF, video and others. With NilRead, there is no need to download any add-ons, plug-ins or other objects to the desktop, making it easier, faster and more convenient for physicians to use. "The ability for physicians to access images quickly is critical for us," says Hinger.



Meet Imaging Associates

Imaging Associates is the imaging center of choice for many Alaska physicians and their patients, providing a unique mix of innovative technologies and services, exam protocols, and subspecialty reads in under two hours. Managed by the largest radiology group in Alaska - Alaska Radiology Associates - the company works to provide physicians with seamless access to high-quality imaging services while providing patients with an exceptional experience. As the only outpatient imaging center in Alaska with subspecialized reads, Imaging Associates offers a wide range of services unique to the state, including prostate MRIs, migraine relief, vascular services, NeuroQuant® 3D modeling for assessment of brain injuries and neurological conditions, and Alaska's first and only high-field open MRI.

- ▶ **Location:** Anchorage, AK
- ▶ **Type:** Medical imaging centers

Products in use: NilRead Enterprise Viewer

Focus: Enterprise Imaging



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Jason Roach

Director of IT, Imaging Associates

One of the features Imaging Associates found to be most valuable in supporting its operating model is NilRead's easy-to-access web-based collaboration tool. Online collaboration, including the ability to analyze and share measurements, helps radiologists communicate and work together more effectively with referring physicians. “Enhanced collaboration between our radiologists and referring physicians aids in the development of cleaner, more accurate treatment plans for our patients,” says Jason Roach, director of IT, Imaging Associates. “Additionally, once a patient imaging exam is completed, everything is in one, comprehensive, easy-to-access location.” NilRead also provides Imaging Associates physicians with a comprehensive timeline of a patient's reports and images. “In the end, NilRead was the only enterprise diagnostic and reference viewer with everything we were looking for,” said Roach. “It was superior to the viewer we had already purchased and others we reviewed.”

Service responsiveness shines through during viewer implementation

“NilRead exceeded our expectations with regard to not only feature/function, but also with serviceability,” says Roach. “The NilRead team has been highly responsive in helping us resolve issues and concerns during and after implementation.”

Roach admits there were a few hiccups when NilRead was initially rolled out to users in the field. “Lexmark Healthcare was on top of every issue within minutes,” he says. According to Roach, whenever a new physician contacts Imaging Associates for access to a patient image, issuance of login credentials typically happens within minutes. “Regarding user acceptance, the NilRead interface is so intuitive that doctors are able to begin using it immediately with little or no instruction,” he adds.

Hinger was also impressed by the capabilities of NilRead. “In my twenty-plus years as a healthcare administrator, I've found that many software products either do not work as advertised or the vendor is unable to get the product implemented correctly,” he says. “NilRead is one of the few products I have ever seen that under-promises and over-delivers. It exceeded our expectations.”

The NilRead viewer software was implemented smoothly without issues. Once the rollout began, Roach's team began to receive constructive suggestions from users about tailoring NilRead to support specific workflows. The Lexmark NilRead team was typically able to deliver a fix within minutes for many of those requests. “We had a number of requests for report viewing changes,” says Roach. “Some of our physicians wanted to view PACS reports in specific formats. Lexmark Healthcare responded, and within hours, reports were revised to meet expectations.”

One of the requests involved matching the Imaging Associates report with the referring physician's report format, eliminating the need for the physician to dictate information into his patient record. Roach called Lexmark Healthcare and the change was delivered the following day. “Lexmark Healthcare went above and beyond to make sure we could access our reports in the desired format. Now, the reports support the way our clinicians want to work and interact. I have a service background, so service is one of the things I really focus on,” says Roach. “Whenever software is implemented, it is not just about how well a product performs, but also how well a vendor responds when there are performance issues and change requests. The Lexmark NilRead team set the bar really high for service care and responsiveness.”



How to identify a “true” zero-footprint viewer

Roach cautions other clinical and IT leaders to be careful when evaluating enterprise viewing solutions, pointing out that prospective vendors should be completely transparent in their definitions of “zero-footprint” performance. Listed below are key questions to ask when shopping for a true zero-footprint solution:

- ▶ What plug-ins will we need?
- ▶ Which web browsers does the software work with?
 - ▶ Are there any other plug-ins needed on those web browsers?
 - ▶ How many versions back does compatibility go?
- ▶ Will my user base be able to use the software they already have installed?

Results

Improved viewing experience enhances clinical workflow and patient care

According to Hinger and Roach, the physicians that have accessed the NilRead viewer to date are extremely satisfied with the way it works, including the ability to access patient reports within two hours. “NilRead is a very easy product to use,” says Roach. “We’ve incorporated it into another one of our software applications used for EHR integration.” This capability gives referring physicians a quick link back to images that are related to reports received via an HL7 interface, saving physicians time that in the past would have been spent searching through various systems.

When working with Imaging Associates radiologists, physicians in other parts of the U.S. can log onto NilRead via the Imaging Associates website using smartphones, tablets and other devices to see patient images and associated reports. “The ability to access NilRead from anywhere will help Imaging Associates expand market reach while providing better all-around care for patients,” says Hinger. “We can also use it for teleradiology reads whenever we bring on new sites outside our local service area. Our plan is to sign up as many practitioners as possible – the access provided by NilRead is the wave of the future.”

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