

The Radiology Administrator's Perspective: A Team Approach to Implementing Bracco's Contrast Management System



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Northwest Radiology is a large private radiology group in Indiana that performs more than 850,000 exams annually for several hospital systems and outpatient facilities throughout the central part of the state. This subspecialty practice supports a variety of referring physicians and their patients with imaging services at five outpatient facilities staffed by 55 radiologists and 47 technologists.

In an effort to simplify contrast protocol management, the practice implemented NEXO® Contrast Management System from Bracco Diagnostics, Inc. This centralized, server-based system supports standardized contrast delivery management by networking a facility's CT injectors. It then tracks contrast delivery and documents performance to improve safety, streamline clinical workflow, and increase productivity across multiple CT suites. NEXO® was implemented on Northwest Radiology's EmpowerCTA®+ Injector Systems, also manufactured by Bracco and part of the SmartInject Solutions platform.

Northwest Radiology became interested in this centralized server-based solution when considering how to reduce contrast costs, one of the largest expenses in the CT suite. However, they didn't want to reduce costs at the expense of imaging quality or workflow efficiencies.

"It's important to find products or solutions that help reduce cost without impacting the integrity of the study. We're also looking for products that allow our staff to gain efficiencies in workflow, so they can engage with the patient to ultimately support the radiologist and

the referring provider so they can better manage the patient's care," explained Lori Bricker, RT(R)(M) RDMS, RVT, director of operations at Northwest Radiology.

Supporting patient care

Northwest Radiology is focused on delivering high-quality patient care, from scheduling the patient to imaging report delivery to the referring physician. "We strive to give patients a comfortable environment that provides the services they need, with equipment that gives our physicians the best opportunity to provide the patient and their referring provider the answers they need for improved patient care," said Bricker.

Since installing the NEXO® software on the EmpowerCTA®+ injectors in September 2021, Bricker said the practice has been able to deliver on this commitment to patient care. The combination of the CT advanced features on the injectors and software has empowered her clinicians to deliver the best diagnostic information to referring physicians.

"With the use of the advanced features on the injectors, along with the results of the recorded analytics, we've been able to refine our images while simultaneously reducing the amount of contrast. That's a win-win for the patient, the provider and our practice," said Bricker.

Northwest Radiology imaging staff also report workflow improvements, as NEXO® allows for automatic updates of imaging protocols without requiring a technologist to visit each location to load any changes. Bricker

emphasized that this capability ensures consistency in delivering excellent imaging services across all of their sites.

“Once a new protocol is confirmed by the radiologists, we can quickly push it out to our other injectors located in CT suites in different locations in our practice. It’s almost seamless, and it has dramatically improved the CT protocol standardization process for Northwest Radiology,” she said.

A seamless transition

Bricker manages Northwest Radiology’s outpatient facilities and was instrumental in supporting the successful implementation of NEXO®. The smooth transition was made possible by the team approach between Northwest Radiology’s departments and Bracco sales and application specialists, whom Bricker had worked with in the past.

“It’s really important to trust your vendor, and it’s equally important to get staff buy-in,” she explained. “Bracco’s representatives are trustworthy and dependable, and our staff has an established comfort level with them, making our decision an easy one.”

Bricker calls Bracco’s style “high touch,” with excellent communication that includes a planning document outlining and guiding the project from start to finish. The installation of the injectors and the deployment of the software was supported by Bracco’s Device and IT Application Specialists, who conduct hands-on, on-site training at each outpatient facility.

“Working with Bracco’s team was excellent, she explained. “We did not have any delay in the delivery of our patient care during the install and software deployment. It was truly a seamless process.”

She advises other imaging practices to choose a vendor they trust, ideally a company they’ve partnered with in the past. She also stressed the importance of getting buy-in from radiologists and technologists, as well as a facility’s IT staff, before implementation.

“It’s critical to make sure that the whole team is working together so we have the key ingredients for success. It’s truly a team approach,” Bricker said.

After nearly a year of using the Spectral CT 7500, Dr. Leiner concluded the technology is clinically valuable for cardiac imaging.

“Always-on spectral CT is highly useful for cardiovascular CT, provides more certainty and unmasking unexpected and unrequested relevant findings,” he said. “We have more flexibility in imaging protocols because of the eight-centimeter spectral coverage, fast table movement and advanced motion correction. We can use lower contrast doses because of contrast behavior properties and, in many indications, we can lower radiation dose.”

Reference

1. Analysis by CARTI Cancer Center in Little Rock Arkansas and University Hospitals of Cleveland - Results from case studies are not predictive of results in other cases. Results in other cases may vary.