

Easing the burden of radiation dose reporting.

Background

Today's healthcare environment calls for more: more reporting, more accountability, more emphasis on efficiency, safety, value and quality of care. Simply put, it calls for more of your time. For providers, it may feel like you're being pulled away from spending time with patients and tending to their care. Satisfying the need to provide "more" may mean data needs to be shared across systems, across care settings, from facility to facility, and from caregiver to caregiver. The question then becomes: how to balance it all and get everything done?

System interfaces that allow data to be automatically—and accurately—passed from one system to another can help.

Heightened focus on radiation dose

Within radiology, radiation dose delivered to the patient has come to the forefront in recent years. With the rapid growth in the number of diagnostic imaging exams performed in the U.S., particularly CT exams in which radiation dose may be 10 to 100 times higher than conventional x-rays, there is now a heightened focus on and awareness of dose and the risks of overexposure. While the correlation between cancer and radiation exposure during imaging exams may be debated, the drive toward monitoring and reducing dose and the adoption of ALARA (as low as reasonably achievable) standards is well-recognized and widely-accepted.

States and accreditation bodies respond

As part of this movement, patient dose reporting requirements are becoming ubiquitous. Starting with California Senate Bill 1237, which went into effect in 2012, and Texas Administrative Code rule §289.227 the following year, radiologists in those states became faced with the requirement to include radiation dose in patient reports. Many other states have considered legislation as well.

But it's not just the individual states that are calling for the mandates. In December of 2013, The Joint Commission (formerly Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, or "JCAHO") published standards in the form of their Revised Requirements for Diagnostic Imaging Services. These standards apply to accredited hospitals, critical access hospitals, and ambulatory care organizations that provide diagnostic imaging services. These new standards will be incorporated into a revised comprehensive set of requirements scheduled for implementation July 2015.

The Joint Commission, the leading national accreditation organization, evaluates and accredits more than 20,000 health care organizations and programs in the U.S., including more than 9500 hospitals and home care organizations, and more than 6300 other health care organizations that provide long term care, behavioral health care, laboratory and ambulatory care services.

The organization focuses on providing an infrastructure for quality, safety and performance improvement and raising awareness of emerging safety issues.

The Joint Commission establishes new standards

Consistent with The Joint Commission's emphasis on quality and emerging safety issues, these new standards call for improvements in a number of areas related to diagnostic imaging, including:

- Documentation of radiation dose
- Annual performance evaluations of imaging equipment
- Minimum qualifications for radiologic technologists

Meanwhile, other states may enact legislation, and other organizations such as the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) and American College of Radiology (ACR) may look to establish standards of their own.

What's the impact?

So, what does this mean? If you are part of a healthcare facility that is, or is looking to be, accredited by The Joint Commission, you will need to have processes in place to comply with the new requirements. While the Joint Commission doesn't specify *how* you meet their standards, you need to have a documented and reliable process. For these new Diagnostic Imaging standards, that means establishing a method for collecting, storing and reporting on patient dose data.

For radiologists, these new requirements can cause some angst: how will I get the data, how will I know it's accurate, how can I make sure I don't miss anything...without impacting my workflow, turnaround time and volumes?

For technologists, if there's no automated process, this may mean manually writing down or otherwise conveying information that is already present within the modality.

CIOs and other IT staff may be pressed into identifying additional systems that enable the movement of this data from the imaging modality to the RIS or EMR/EHR.

Management and administrative staff worries about it all. It's just one more thing on an ever-growing list.

New standards require documentation of radiation dose in the patient's report and medical record.

To meet these new diagnostic imaging standards, you must establish a means for collecting, storing and reporting on patient dose data.

How can Nuance help?

Nuance solutions can ease the burden. As we look for ways to make you more efficient, more connected and more successful, we provide a variety of data interfaces for the PowerScribe 360 platform. Specifically, dose data from the DICOM Structured Report (SR) can auto-populate the radiology report. So you don't have to re-enter or restate the same information over and over again. An error-prone manual data entry step can be eliminated.

What's more, Nuance's flexible and open web services API allows dose data from third-party dose monitoring software products to similarly auto-populate the radiology report.

Accurate data becomes available, automatically, for a multitude of reporting needs—for today and tomorrow.

Additionally, with PowerScribe 360's flexible and customizable report templates, you can rest easy that you won't miss important information such as radiation dose or contrast media administration. Or whatever that new reporting requirement may be. And the resultant report gets the required information back to the RIS or EMR/EHR as needed.

We think ahead so you can focus on what's important to your business, your colleagues and your patients.

PowerScribe 360.

Proven for today, power for tomorrow.

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Nuance Communications is reinventing the relationship between people and technology. Through its voice and language offerings, the company is creating a more human conversation with the many systems, devices, electronics, apps and services around us. Every day, millions of people and thousands of businesses experience Nuance through intelligent systems that can listen, understand, learn and adapt to your life and your work. For more information, please visit nuance.com.
