

Automated After-Hours Workflow Ensures Quality Pediatric Reads Around-the-Clock

Austin Radiological Association (ARA) is one of the largest private radiology groups in the country. With about 103 board-certified radiologists, most with subspecialty training, ARA ranked No. 7 in full-time equivalents (FTE) and No.



2 in procedure volume in the 2016 Radiology 100 Largest Private Radiology Practices List by Radiology Business. ARA operates 17 outpatient locations throughout Austin and Central Texas and provides reading services for 21 hospitals/44 service providers. ARA also has a strong relationship with a large number of insurance carriers and managed care providers. ARA is a member of Strategic Radiology, a national coalition of clinically advanced and geographically dispersed radiology practices that aligned to advance quality in radiology. Members share data and best practices, consolidate certain practice expenses, and improve the value of patient care. “Excellence in imaging” is ARA’s stated goal.

ARA’s imaging centers offer every exam from mammography to MRI. ARA also has specialty centers for women and pediatric patients. Its Children’s Imaging Center in Austin offers 1.5T MRI, fluoroscopy, ultrasound and X-ray. ARA also reads for DELL Children’s Medical Center of Central Texas and St. David’s Children’s Hospital, both in Austin.

24/7 Pediatric Subspecialty Reading

ARA partners with Strategic Radiology to support pediatric radiology coverage between the hours of 10 p.m. and 8 a.m. Strategic Radiology contracts with Diversified Radiology of Colorado in Lakewood, Colorado who has three pediatric radiologists who perform the image interpretation during the nighttime hours.

ARA’s overnight pediatric service reads about 12,000 pediatric studies annually. “We strive to provide a 30-minute report Turnaround Time (TAT) for all pediatric emergency

“Laurel Bridge solutions enable us to provide a high quality pediatric subspecialty reading service to our customers 24/7.”

Todd Thomas
CIO

room cases and 60-minute report TAT for all inpatient pediatric studies,” says Julie Wesselman, Director of Hospital Relations at ARA. “This is a very aggressive timeframe that requires our IT systems to reliably support efficient imaging workflows.”

An Integrated Workflow Approach

Two imaging workflow solutions from Laurel Bridge Software Inc. help ARA meet its clients' pediatric needs and its commitment to short TATs. One is Compass; the other is Navigator. ARA uses Compass to send both new and historical studies from its pediatric clients' PACS to Diversified Radiology's PACS to be read. Diversified Radiology's PACS is an external PACS, not managed by ARA. "It is important to delivering on our promises that we have this capability," says Todd Thomas, ARA's CIO. ARA uses Navigator to retrieve the pediatric patients' historical studies from five different PACS archives and send them to Diversified Radiology's PACS. "Navigator actually fetches studies from one customer's external PACS archive," Thomas says. "The other PACS archives are internally managed."

Compass and Navigator work in tandem to ensure that the workflow is reliably fast and easily monitored. In 2012/2013, ARA expanded its use of Navigator to support mammography pre-fetching, "but we found the expansion has been helpful in turning around our pediatric caseload as well," Thomas says. "By automating the process across the numerous, disparate PACS archives we have to manage, we can guarantee that the right imaging studies get into the hands of the appropriate clinicians at the right time," says Brandon Redden, ARA PACS Administrator.

Benefits to Austin Radiological Associates

ARA sees clear benefits of using a comprehensive solution from Laurel Bridge for meeting its workflow needs. Says Thomas:

- "It enables us to provide our customers a high quality pediatric subspecialty reading service 24/7.
- It enables ARA to meet our Turnaround Time commitments for overnight pediatric imaging exams while minimizing our FTE staffing requirements.
- And, it enables ARA to leverage the subspecialty resources in other practices that are part of the Strategic Radiology consortium and avoids the additional cost of having to hire our own overnight pediatric radiologists."

"No doubt Laurel Bridge Software contributes greatly to ARA's ability to stay ahead of the rapidly changing needs of its pediatric clients," Thomas says.