



# Welcoming the Snowbirds – and Saving Money

## An IntelPACS Case Study

### Florida Health System Finds a PACS That Works

To meet seasonal volume increases, NCH Healthcare System in Naples, Florida replaced its legacy PACS system in favor of an Intelrad solution. Now NCH is enjoying a next-generation PACS solution that saves money and increases efficiency while scaling to all its growth. This includes year-to-year volume increases as well as peak periods serving 'snowbirds' who flock to the region each fall to escape winter weather.

### About NCH Healthcare System

Florida-based Naples Diagnostic Imaging Center (NDIC) is part of the NCH Healthcare System, an alliance of more than 500 independent physicians and medical facilities. A two-hospital, 681-bed system, NCH provides personalized care to more than 30,000 patients every year.

Like other healthcare networks in temperate U.S. locations, NCH experiences dramatic shifts in patient populations due to the snowbirds who flock to the region between October and May every year. As a result, the NCH radiology business volume increases by more than 20 percent each fall as snowbirds arrive and turn to the system's two full-service hospitals and four outpatient radiology clinics. Experienced snowbirds bring their medical images with them in various forms, including DVD and film.

### First PACS Solution Falls Short

NCH first sought a PACS solution in 2003, with typical goals such as better management of radiology workload, improved productivity and increased efficiency as compared to a film-based service. However, the radiologists were quickly disappointed with the first PACS solution adopted at NCH – productivity gains were limited and it became evident that this initial system was not capable of meeting the health system's long-term growth needs.

With this initial PACS solution, radiologists could read studies from several different locations, but the system was not fast or powerful enough to manage the multi-site workflow. This affected productivity significantly and inflated the overall cost of delivering care.

Limitations in the import and patient numbering features of the early PACS system created more headaches. Radiologists struggled to create a complete patient profile when images and studies were scattered between Florida and radiology systems "back home."

As time went on, disappointment in this first PACS system only grew. The viewer interface was poor, making it difficult for radiologists to work comfortably or efficiently. There was no support for hanging protocols, which was required to display priors correctly. Because the legacy PACS system was unable to accommodate the wide range of study types read at NCH – including MRI, CT, US, NM, CR, DR, Mammography and PET – the manual creation of a daily, paper-based worklist was required. This awkward workaround further complicated workflow.

These limitations of the first PACS system at NCH caused system-wide difficulties for the technologists, radiologists, clinicians, and even referring physicians. Unfortunately, when NCH turned to their initial PACS vendor for assistance, the company was not responsive and proved difficult to work with, compounding the situation.

### Intelrad Offers a Superior Choice

NCH administrators decided to seek a superior PACS solution that would streamline their radiology workflow, better handle images and other data originating from other facilities, and address the myriad of other shortcomings exhibited by the first PACS system.

In evaluating replacement PACS candidates, NCH was able to easily articulate the technical requirements. These included better system response, less downtime, access to priors, support for hanging protocols, and overall ease of use.

The second time around, NCH was a more discriminating shopper. The radiologists were active participants in the evaluation process, recognizing the PACS system as a complex and integral part of their practice - critical to delivering a continuity of care to patients across the entire healthcare system.

After a rigorous evaluation period and extensive reference checks which spanned several major PACS vendors, NCH chose the innovative IntelePACS® solution from Intelrad. Intelrad was the clear winner. Bates and other NCH decision-makers were impressed by Intelrad's solid reputation, superior pricing, and the comprehensive IntelePACS feature set.

"The first time around, choosing a PACS system was more difficult because PACS was new to us, and it was viewed as a radiology system when it should have been presented as a system-wide initiative," says Jim Bates, Director of NCH Imaging Services, who was Director of Radiology when IntelePACS was first evaluated. "In choosing IntelePACS, we understood what we needed, and that radiology and imaging was central to all that takes place at the hospitals and clinics. We knew how important the PACS system is to the health system's overall operations."



The NCH Center for Cardiac and Cardiology Services (Copyright Intelrad Medical Systems)

## Lower Costs, Improved Service and Ten Times the Speed

Today at NCH, IntelePACS is significantly improving the overall productivity and efficiency across the health system. "The real advantage of a PACS system, especially a good PACS, is that you can distribute the work evenly to the radiologists so they can easily get through and turn around studies in a more reasonable time," Bates observes.

With IntelePACS, radiology and imaging services at NCH are now an astounding ten times faster. "With our speed and turnaround time, this radiology department is as speedy as any radiology department in the country," Bates says. This helps NCH lower the overall cost of delivering healthcare to the communities it serves. "If you can reduce the amount of time that people are in our ERs, or shorten their length of stay," he explains, "then that's reducing the overall cost of healthcare."

With IntelePACS, NCH has easily managed an annual three percent volume increase, to the approximately 280,000 studies read in 2009. Because of productivity and efficiency gains from IntelePACS, the NDIC radiology clinics expect to save more than \$875,000 annually by handling the increased volume without increasing staffing levels. (Savings based on Florida radiologist salary estimates from the AuntMinnie SalaryScan survey).

## Endless Possibilities

The IntelePACS advantages go beyond improved workflow, higher productivity, and lower costs. The ability to integrate IntelePACS with its Hospital Information System (HIS) and Radiology Information Systems (RIS) is a huge additional benefit for NCH. Another big win is the ability to extend the IntelePACS feature set with additional modules that offer support for orthopedics, PET/CT, communicating with multiple RIS, speech recognition, and mammography, among others.

"We chose to replace our standalone mammography system with Intelrad's IntelePACS Breast Imaging solution," says Dee Myli, Assistant Director of Radiology. "Our previous system was still a paper-based one and it didn't allow radiologists to see prior studies. IntelePACS Breast Imaging has allowed the radiologists to be that much more productive, since they no longer have to go between two systems to make their diagnoses."

## Improved Outcomes, Better Care

The adoption of IntelePACS has given NCH the ability to easily absorb steady year-to-year growth as well as the annual spike in volume due to the snowbirds' arrival each fall. Moreover, the new solution has streamlined operations and enabled NCH to deliver an even higher standard of care.

"We have digital equipment, a top notch PACS, fast turnaround on transcriptions and reports ... we are so efficient," Bates reports. "At the end of the day I am confident IntelePACS is helping us to reduce the overall cost of delivering healthcare. Meanwhile, at NCH we are improving outcomes and delivering better care to our patients."

For more resources, visit [www.intelerad.com/nch\\_pdf](http://www.intelerad.com/nch_pdf)

## About Intelrad Medical Systems

Intelrad is a recognized leader in medical imaging PACS and workflow solutions. IntelePACS® relies on a scalable, flexible, and fault-tolerant architecture. Intelrad solutions, like InteleOne™, have a strong reputation for reliability and performance in complex, multi-site environments with challenging workflows.

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