GE plans launch of integrated PACS/RIS product at RSNA

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GE Medical Systems will launch its latest salvo in the battle for PACS market dominance when it introduces a combined PACS/RIS product at the RSNA meeting in November. The as-yet-unnamed product will combine the GE's PathSpeed PACS and ProgRIS information system into one device that will include advanced features from both.

"The biggest challenge faced by customers implementing PACS is that they have two different systems, one for images and the other for patient information," said Vishal Wanchoo, vice president of radiology services at GE Information Technologies. "That inhibits productivity."

Ideally, practitioners should be able to address a single computer to gather information of both types. For this to happen, the databases for each must be compatible. In most cases today, they are not, Wanchoo said.

"You're always trying to get those two databases in sync with the department," he said.

"Radiologists have to log into different systems for reading and reporting; so do technologists. Even though PACS improves productivity tremendously, you've still got these things that slow people down."

The new GE product addresses those issues and more. Radiologists will be able to log into a completely integrated desktop, gaining access to all information relevant to patient exams, history, and future orders, as well as the images themselves. The PACS/RIS system is also Web-enabled, so those features can be accessed remotely or on-site.

"Radiologists at home or in a remote office could access the queue of reports that need to be signed off," Wanchoo said. "If they need to see clinically relevant images during that sign-off process, they can access those as well. It's a whole new level of productivity."

The company has created an upgrade path for existing PathSpeed and ProgRIS customers. The target market for the new product includes customers with an existing RIS in need of replacement.

"We feel that every facility implementing PACS will find this attractive," Wanchoo said. "They'll want to get this further enhancement to productivity with a single application."

Customers who have recently implemented a new RIS may not be willing to go through the exercise anytime soon, he agreed. But for sites that have been waiting to implement PACS, the prospect of an integrated product could lure them into the fray.

"This is a great stepping stone for customers," Wanchoo said. "They could take one of two routes. For those who have just gotten into PACS, we can upgrade them with RIS capability within the installed system. For those who have an antiquated RIS product, we can replace that part and, after the transition, we can go in and turn on the PACS piece. We've planned it both ways."

Wanchoo expects the new release to strengthen GE's position in the PACS market by increasing market share.

"This is going to be a huge competitive advantage for us," he said. "And the fact that this product is being delivered 100% from a single company means that we own its development and can create a road map for its evolution. It's also an advantage in that we don't have to try to source products from different vendors to put the system together."

Costs for the new product will vary widely depending on implementation schemes and volumes. The incremental cost of turning on the RIS portion of the integrated system, however, will average only about 5% of the total cost of the product, Wanchoo said.

The new PACS/RIS product is also available for purchase as an application service provider (ASP) offering, he said. ASPs and the new product launch compose the company's two main emphases for the upcoming RSNA meeting.

"The launch of the integrated PACS/RIS is going to create a lot of excitement, but the deployment with an ASP is also important," Wanchoo said. "Whether deployed as an ASP or on-site is a matter of customer choice."

Disclosures:

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