

The Image of Efficiency...

Sony FilmStation Imager Speeds Workflow at Burgeoning Imaging Center Chain

“Go with the flow,” says William M. Kelly, M.D., radiologist and entrepreneur, who believes this is a highly successful business strategy. Fast, efficient workflow—enabled by state-of-the-art technology—is one of the major drivers of an imaging center’s success, according to this founder and medical director of a thriving four-location imaging network in Southern California.

Proving the point dramatically, Dr. Kelly said he has made his busy Health Scan Imaging (HSI) in Murrieta, CA.-- selected as a Toshiba Center for Excellence— a showcase of carefully chosen next-generation equipment working together for the benefit of his rapidly growing practice and patients. At HSI, imaging efficiency starts with a 1.5T MRI fine-tuned for ultra-fast scanning and image processing, as well as for patient comfort and high-quality results. Complementing this is an equally efficient and effective 32-slice, multi-detector CT. Also in the mix are an advanced integrated PACS, local and wide-area networks, workstations and digital image management tools. Dr. Kelly says that together, they speed high-quality diagnostic information 24/7 wherever it needs to go throughout HSI’s spacious, open high-tech facilities and beyond.

Completing the imaging process with similar high quality, an advanced, compact Sony FilmStation dry imager hums throughout the day, delivering a steady stream of clear, diagnostic-quality images in a variety of formats to cater to the preferences of a full range of referring physicians.

A healthy demand for film

According to Dr. Kelly, HIS, Murrieta, is growing dramatically, and the Sony FilmStation imager is playing an important role. He explained that even in this digital age, many referring physicians prefer film.

“The ability to meet their needs quickly and conveniently with high-quality images is key to building ongoing referrals,” Dr. Kelly said. “And, of course, referrals fuel success for any imaging center.”

Service is paramount to Dr. Kelly's business plan, and according to him, the center typically delivers results within 6 to 12 hours. With two new locations scheduled to open shortly, Dr. Kelly cites HSI's rapidly expanding market share as a testament to the success of this strategy. He plans to equip both centers with Sony FilmStation dry imagers.

Providing him with a well-rounded perspective on medicine, Dr. Kelly's career spans military, educational and hospital settings in addition to his own independent centers. Based on that experience, he stated, "In any setting, medicine allows little room for errors—especially those that can be avoided. With enormous responsibilities, truly committed doctors usually strive to assume control over of as much as they can in their medical practices. Equipment selection and administrative workflow issues are the easiest to successfully address."

From costly image acquisition devices to information systems and imagers, Dr. Kelly said he believes all technology should be selected judiciously with both the current and future needs of the practice in mind.

"Once a sound technology platform is in place, you can focus more effectively on the human factors involved in delivering efficient, quality medical care—from careful selection and management of staff to complex clinical decision-making," Dr. Kelly said.

FilmStation selected after a thorough market survey

Dr. Kelly's selection of the Sony FilmStation imager was the result of a decision-making process similar to his major purchases of cutting edge Toshiba Vantage high field MRI and Toshiba Aquilion multi-slice CT equipment. When purchasing an imager, he was looking for image quality, speed, compact size and ease of use—at an affordable price. He conducted a thorough survey of the marketplace to ensure a selection that would support his well-thought-out goals.

"I found many imagers simply couldn't measure up," Dr. Kelly said. "When I completed evaluation of the Sony FilmStation, I was elated."

A powerhouse performer

The Sony FilmStation printer combines powerhouse performance with a small footprint (one of the industry's most compact) and supports Dr. Kelly's dedication to quality and efficient workflow. For most physicians, however, the acid test of an imager is print quality.

“With the FilmStation system, what you see on the control panel is exactly what you get in print,” Dr. Kelly said. “FilmStation image consistency and quality are superb. It delivers high-resolution in 4,096 shades of gray, thanks to an innovative design and specially engineered blue thermal film.”

Noting that a large number of surgeons request studies in hard copy, Dr. Kelly said that quality is paramount because HSI’s FilmStation images are often used for surgical planning and taken right into the operating room. Also, because surgeons often work in a variety of locations, they often want a montage of key images in a portable format.

“Additionally, other specialists are simply more comfortable with hard copy, and I don’t see that situation changing for the remainder of my career,” he said. “In the foreseeable future, there will always be a need for printing devices and film.”

Given this, Dr. Kelly believes that a good dry imager also is key to making the most of today’s high-performance modalities.

“To a large extent, the vast clinical insights of advanced CT and MRI reach the skilled clinician through a few sheets of medical film,” Dr. Kelly said. This makes a high-quality imager such as FilmStation an indispensable part of the diagnostic process.”

Ultra-fast processing speed

Streamlining workflow and providing timely results, Sony’s high-speed processing delivers diagnostic images in less than one minute.

“Turnover is so fast, patients usually can leave the center with their films, if desired,” Dr. Kelly said.

At bustling HSI Murrieta, Dr. Kelly relies on a single FilmStation imager, integrated both directly to modalities and through a PACS for printing MRI, CT and ultrasound.

“With its speed and overall powerhouse performance, a single FilmStation system can support an entire multi-modality imaging center,” stated the radiologist.

If HSI’s procedure volume requires an additional imager, two FilmStation imagers can be linked together by cable to share the workload with a lightning-fast combined speed of up to 130 films per hour. FilmStation is the first imager that is genuinely scaleable, with cost for the dual configuration less than most single larger and slower units. Moreover, two imagers builds in redundancy.

Noting that controlling imaging center overhead can be a challenge for the

inexperienced, Dr. Kelly said that FilmStation’s small footprint—a standout in the industry—and affordable price point are significant benefits that can help contain costs.

According to Dr. Kelly, the compact FilmStation can be placed right on or under a control station countertop, and the design enables either horizontal or space-saving vertical installation. “My imager is right out in the open nearby our CT and MRI equipment for fast, convenient workflow,” he said. The FilmStation imager has almost no specific siting requirements. The handsome unobtrusive design even blends with the spacious, open, high-tech facility.

With a purchase price about half that of other imagers delivering similarly high print quality, the FilmStation offers tremendous value. Moreover, film and maintenance costs also are affordable. Dr. Kelly commented, “After just 10 months using an imager from another manufacturer, I had to replace a \$10,000 thermal print head. Sony’s are rated for 50,000 prints or three years of normal use, which ever comes first.”

Supporting imaging efficiency and quality results

With the crucial role film continues to play in radiology, reliability and ease-of-use in an imager are important, and Dr. Kelly says Sony more than measures up to his demanding standards.

According to Dr. Kelly, the FilmStation imager, along with HSI’s state-of-the-art Toshiba CT and MRI as well as his talented dedicated staff, plays a key role in keeping an advanced, costly, high-volume imaging facility running like clockwork and delivering timely results to referring physicians. This leads to quality patient care and practice profitability.

“In a way, I make the same demands of my technology as I do of my staff,” said the savvy physician. “I like to work with people who, every day and in every way, can be trusted to do the right thing—even when no one is looking. I rely on my FilmStation to do the same. It’s all part of good medicine.”