

What is PACS?

Providence Care has implemented the technology called Picture Archiving & Communication System (PACS) that will allow images and reports to be accessed by multiple people at multiple locations at any given time.

Traditionally x-rays are obtained and stored on film, meaning departments must share these film images, shuttling them from one place to another. PACS will enable the image to be viewed on PCs via a secure website or through PCI in Meditech ensuring availability virtually anywhere on site at any time.

Here is a brief outline of **how PACS works**:

1. A patient's x-ray order is entered into an information system. In our hospital, that is Meditech.
2. A technologist performs the x-ray exam and the image is captured in a digital (electronic) format, much the same way that a digital camera captures an image.
3. The digital image is transferred to an Image Storage Unit which is located and shared with the Kingston General Hospital.
4. The x-ray images are now ready to be retrieved for viewing by multiple physicians or other healthcare professionals within the hospital on a workstation or PC. At the same time, the image remains fully available for the radiologist to review, manipulate, and report.

What are the benefits?

PACS offers many improvements over the current delivery of images and reports that exist today. Here are a few key benefits:

Improved patient care through faster report turn around and elimination of delays due to loss or waiting for films to be returned.

Access to any image at any time. Referring physicians and other healthcare providers will have access to images almost immediately after exam completion on any PC connected to our computer network.

Quality computed radiography (CR) equipment result in high-quality images. Time-savings are realized through reduced film and master file handling and film storage.

Cost. Costly storage requirements and environmental issues of chemical processing and disposal are significantly reduced.

Leadership. We help maintain our position as southeastern Ontario's leader for rehabilitation, specialized geriatric care, complex continuing care, specialized mental health care, and palliative care.

Sharing. We will immediately be sharing diagnostic images with the Kingston General Hospital, Hotel Dieu Hospital, Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospitals and the Lennox and Addington County General Hospital. Over the next year we will make steps to join a larger shared image repository, which will allow sharing of images with 21 other hospitals in central and southeastern Ontario.

FAQ's

You likely have questions about how PACS will integrate into your working environment. Here are the answers to some frequently asked questions.

Q: Is digital image quality as good as film?

A: There is actually more information in digital images. They allow for improved visualization of pathology as images can be manipulated, i.e. magnified, measured, annotated, brightness adjusted, etc.

Q: What about previous exams?

A: Previous exams will continue to be available to Radiologists and referring physicians as required on film.

Q: How will a digital image be accessed?

A: Images will be accessed at workstations throughout the hospital via a desktop PC. Images will most frequently be accessed via PCI within Meditech just as reports are accessed today. A second phase of the project will explore opportunities for sharing our images externally with other hospitals.

Q. What about the security of the images?

A. There is a very high degree of security in PACS for all images.

For Training Contact:

Tanya McDonald

PACS Administrator

Phone: 613-548-7222, ext. 2249

Email: mcdonat2@providencecare.ca

