
Agfa HealthCare

Symbion Imaging, a division of ASX listed Symbion Health Limited, is a provider of digital imaging in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Symbion Imaging, which is ranked third largest in the digital imaging market, has 130 sites across Australia and employs more than 150 radiologists. The company has commenced installing Agfa's IMPAX PACS solution (Picture Archiving and Communication Solution) in late 2001, and implemented telereporting, computed radiography (CR), load balancing and archiving in two subsequent roll-outs. This technology replaced redundant systems, increasing both productivity and profitability.

IMPAX EPS, developed by Agfa Australia, is a teleradiology solution that monitors study transmissions between sites across an entire health network, and provides a global view of study location and status. It provides the end-user with a realtime representation of every site and the studies resident at them. As a result radiologists no longer have to locate work on the network or manually initiate study retrieves from sites across the network. This allows them to focus on reporting. The operational benefits of the system include simplification of IT infrastructure and system queue management. Finally, improvements to patient outcome can be achieved, particularly for patients in rural areas, who benefit from report turnaround time of an hour, instead of the 2 or 3 days they used to have to wait.

Mr Robert Cooke, Managing Director and CEO of Symbion Health stated: "IMPAX EPS enables us to expand services to reach regional and remote areas that do not have access to radiology on a 24-hour basis, which is particularly relevant as a shortage of specialists continues to impact on regional areas." In terms of sub-specialising, teleradiology gives radiologists more ability, according to Dr Ronald Shnier, Director of Symbion Imaging Clinical Research Imaging Centre, and National Director of Research and Professional Development at Symbion Imaging. "If you have several practices across a network, you can, for example send all the neurology work to one site, and all the musculoskeletal work to another. It gives radiologists the ability to sub-specialise and develop centres of excellence," he added.

Symbion Imaging now has 64 sites with teleradiology capacity. "IMPAX EPS sits over the top of our 64 sites, and gives us an enterprise-wide view of the whole network from one computer workstation. The solution gives us complete flexibility on a given day to handle manpower shortages, by effectively redistributing work with a mouse-click. It is so simple," said Gary Nicholls, National Major Projects Manager at Symbion Imaging. "Our corporate objective in this matter is to achieve economies of scale. EPS adds to our capability to expand our teleradiology network within Australia and internationally."

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