



Imaging Center Sees Increase in Referrals with Multislice CT

Saltzer Medical Group, Nampa, Idaho

Case Study

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Siemens SOMATOM Emotion 16 in the Diagnostic Imaging Center:

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Situated in Nampa, Idaho, Saltzer Medical Group is the largest physician owned multi-specialty medical group in the state, with 11 locations and more than 45 referring physicians. With no internal diagnostic imaging center, Saltzer Medical Group physicians previously referred their patients to six outside imaging facilities for general ultrasounds, computed tomography (CT) scans, and full-body magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) studies. As the demand for diagnostic imaging continued to grow throughout the region, however, the Group's physicians found it increasingly difficult for their patients to have studies completed expeditiously.

Saltzer Medical Group eventually decided there was a better solution. Looking to set a new benchmark in the provision of medical imaging services in southwestern Idaho, the Group opened its own diagnostic imaging center, bringing new and improved services into town. Saltzer Medical Group hired Drew Taylor, BS, RTR (MR) as director of Medical Imaging to lead the initiative and help open Saltzer Imaging. Taylor was immediately challenged with finding CT equipment that would deliver high-quality reports in the most cost-effective manner.

"Saltzer Medical Group wanted to be able to conveniently schedule studies, control the patient experience and offer its patients the highest quality of care within the community," said Taylor. Saltzer Imaging also needed to select imaging systems that could exceed its quality expectations while staying with its budget.



The Solution





The Solution: the SOMATOM Emotion 16 Scanner from Siemens

Taylor immediately knew that a multislice CT scanner was the most important component of the new imaging center. While there are numerous CT slice configurations, Taylor narrowed his search to 16-slice systems. With 16 slices, Saltzer Imaging could perform excellent high-resolution chest, abdomen, pelvis, and renal studies – studies that make up the bulk of the procedures at an ambulatory imaging center.

The challenge Taylor faced, however, was finding the right vendor for Saltzer Imaging. “Our physicians are very in tune with Siemens and have always liked their products, but it was important to explore our options,” said Taylor. After researching a number of CT scanners from an array of vendors, Taylor ultimately selected Siemens SOMATOM® Emotion 16 Scanner.

The decision to purchase the Emotion 16 was primarily because of its ability to quickly deliver first-rate images. He also wanted a scanner with a comprehensive user interface, and the Siemens system delivered. “The *syngo*® platform is incredible. We have our CT and MR scanners back-

to-back, and I have a technologist that is both CT- and MR-certified, so he’s able to cover both systems very easily,” stated Taylor. “The fact that we run the *syngo* platform has been a major competitive advantage in attracting technologists with experience on it. The common user interface shared across modalities makes it much easier to learn the intricacies of a new imaging system.”

Siemens service options and price point were two additional selling features for Saltzer Imaging. “At the service level we contracted, we’ll see a complete computer upgrade for the CT scanner within three years. Siemens worked very hard to give us the ability to stay competitive and their offering was more economical than what we saw from other vendors,” Taylor said.

In addition to the many procedural benefits of the Emotion 16, Saltzer Imaging was also impressed by the quick and fluid installation and training process. “The total time for the install was only a day and a half, and the staff responded very well to the on-site training Siemens provided,” said Taylor.



A Successful Roll-Out

Since its opening on January 14, 2008, Saltzer Imaging has not had to turn away any patients; the Emotion 16 has been capable of performing every type of study requested and delivering exceptional results. The speedy imaging on the Emotion 16 also makes it easy for the staff to accommodate unscheduled patients without creating a backlog or unduly adding to the patient wait time.

With the 16-slice system, Saltzer Imaging has the ability to perform everything from high-resolution chest and orthopedic studies to sinus and facial bone studies. "The Siemens scanner is very well-suited for our needs," said James Engelhart, M.D., a radiologist reading for Saltzer Imaging. "It does everything that we need it to do and the images show excellent contrast and detail."

Roughly 15 percent of Saltzer Imaging's current patients are children, and the Emotion 16 is helping the center cater to this market. The system has dedicated, dose-limiting pediatric protocols built in and it also can perform high-quality imaging at less dose than similar competitive systems. "Patients are asking more and more about dose these days," said Taylor. "They have become increasingly aware of the potential risks of high dose and expect their physicians to take the necessary precautions."

The Emotion 16 has led to a major competitive advantage in how patients perceive the imaging center. It allows Saltzer Imaging to see a broader range of patients. With a high-table weight capacity, Saltzer Imaging can provide service to many obese patients. Additionally, the small footprint of the scanner has been well received and the system is extremely quiet, which has garnered many compliments from patients. Because the system scans so quickly, Saltzer Imaging staff can have a higher-touch patient experience, without creating a back-up at the front desk. "The system's speed gives us a chance to spend that much more time with the patient."



Referring physicians are also happy with the service from the new CT scanner. Physician satisfaction is directly resulting in a positive return on investment. "Feedback from the referring physicians has been encouraging," said Taylor. "They are happy with the excellent quality of the images and are becoming more and more confident in the capabilities of the imaging center. The quality of the radiologists' reports has been impressive as well, and we're receiving more referrals as a result. This is tied hand-in-hand to the systems's output."

The Saltzer Imaging staff has responded very well to the new scanner and to its relationship with Siemens. "I have been extremely pleased with the Emotion 16 scanner. The *syngo* platform is extremely user friendly and the image quality and speed of the scanner is very impressive," said Chandra Deblasio, lead CT technologist at Saltzer Imaging. "The Siemens representatives are always accessible, day or night. Working with them has been incredible, and as far as I'm concerned, they've gone above and beyond the call of duty."

Although Saltzer Imaging's original intent was not to openly accept outside referrals, the feedback has been so overwhelmingly positive that the center is planning to make some concessions. "Our main challenge now is figuring out how to handle the demand for out-of-group referral. We're getting so many calls from external physicians wanting to send patients here because of what they hear about the image quality and the patient experience."

With the SOMATOM Emotion 16 providing so many benefits to Saltzer Imaging, Taylor expects to continue to look to Siemens as a vendor of choice when the group expands its service offerings. "I've been impressed with the way Siemens representatives handled themselves from the minute we started negotiations through the time of the turnover of the system," said Taylor. "It was really well thought out and well done."

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