

Transforming cardiac imaging at Lee Memorial Hospital

A new CT system expands capabilities, boosts staff confidence, and supports patient care



When Lee Memorial Hospital in Fort Myers, FL, sought to modernize its cardiac imaging services, its team faced a familiar challenge: an aging CT scanner that couldn't keep up with clinical demands. Recognizing the importance of timely access to advanced heart care, Lee Health leadership made the decision to invest in new technology. "All of our other sister campuses had faster scanners that could perform beautiful cardiac scans. We couldn't," says Daisy Leon, Lead CT Technologist.

This gap in cardiac imaging abilities brought challenges for patients, referring physicians, and staff. "There was actually a backlog of patients waiting to get appointments for specific cardiac exams that we were unable to do on this campus," Leon continues. By investing in a state-of-the-art system, Lee Health demonstrated its commitment to putting patients first and ensuring access to the highest level of care.

Lori Carithers, Systems Director of Imaging Services adds, "We as a health system were looking for a scanner that could help us grow our cardiac CT business. The SOMATOM Pro.Pulse has filled a gap in our scanning portfolio and has allowed us to develop and grow our cardiac program to include systolic imaging, which has been a game changer. Scanning patients with minimal heart rate control has led to us opening our access to cardiac CT imaging in the outpatient setting."

The installation of the SOMATOM Pro.Pulse marked a turning point—not only in imaging capabilities but also in staff engagement and patient experience. "The dual-source capability made the system very attractive for us and for our coronary imaging goals," says Jamie Robel, Radiology Manager. "We had some room size limitations, and the new system fit those needs. The turnover time for installation was very fast. Overall, we were very pleased with the entire process."



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Lori Carithers
Systems Director of Imaging Services
Lee Memorial Hospital, Fort Myers, FL

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Transitioning to a completely new system

The new CT system meant Lee Memorial could bring in-house several exams that were previously referred out, including coronary CT angiography, Watchman device planning, and TAVR assessments. However, the team had no prior experience with Siemens Healthineers CT systems.

"The staff were very anxious about transitioning to a new platform, but their fears were resolved after a few days," says Leon. "By the end of the final day of initial training, the staff were scanning on the system by themselves. Once they learned the tips and tricks of the scanner, their confidence skyrocketed. Our techs find it very user friendly and very straightforward."

Leveraging technology to empower staff

There are several reasons the staff like working with the new system, including the scanner's automation features. Zero-click workflows, Recon&GO, and the Scan&GO tablet have significantly reduced manual steps and improved efficiency. "We're spending less time on post-processing and more time with patients," Leon says. "That's helped improve our patient experience scores."

To support more advanced cardiac imaging, the staff can use features like clinical decision trees and myExam Companion. "We are amazed at how precise the technology is," says Leon. "These tools have also been helpful for newer staff because it makes the exams less intimidating. They're excited to learn and feel empowered to take on advanced procedures." In addition, the mobile workflow means technologists have all the information they need right at their fingertips within the room.

Technology that empowers the staff also contributes to staff morale. "PRN staff from other campuses are now eager to pick up shifts here," Leon says. "It's made our department a place people want to work."

Streamlining protocols and throughput

With installation and training complete, the team began to realize the system's impact on their workflow efficiency. "We love the decision trees. They've helped us reduce our protocol list from 252 to 135. That's a big jump and it's all because there were duplicate exams in our prior protocols," says Leon. "We were able to integrate with the decision tree, so at the click of one answer, it pops up or populates the correct exam. The system guides you through the scan—it's like having a navigator. This ultimately means fewer errors and faster setup."

"[SOMATOM Pro.Pulse] ...has allowed us to shorten our appointment slots from an hour to just under 30 minutes and increase our volumes..."



Juan Gaztanaga, MD
Medical Director, Cardiac CT
Lee Memorial Hospital, Fort Myers, FL



Dr. Juan Gaztanaga, Medical Director, Cardiac CT agrees. "The Pro.Pulse scanner delivers dual source capability along with decision tree software. This allows us to automate the implementation of diastolic versus systolic imaging based on the patient's heart rate at the start of the exam, with minimal pre-medication. This has allowed us to shorten our appointment slots from an hour to just under 30 minutes and increase our volumes, while maintaining excellent quality."

Robel agrees that the system has increased patient throughput. "The new scanner has definitely increased our efficiency and throughput at this facility," Robel says. Patients have also noticed the difference. "We've had repeat patients say, 'Wow, that was so much faster than last time,'" adds Leon. "And they love how the scanner looks—clean, modern, and calming."

Expanding capabilities with confidence

The additional capabilities now possible with the new system support physician referrals and patient access to advanced cardiac CT exams. "Our radiologists and cardiologists are very satisfied with the new system," Robel continues. "As a result, at this facility, we've been able to build a book of business doing CCTAs—exams that were not possible before we had this system."

A reliable asset in patient care

Since its installation, the SOMATOM Pro.Pulse has proven to be a stable and reliable system. Leon adds, "It's made our workflow more efficient, improved staff satisfaction, and helped us deliver better care."

For Leon and her team, the scanner has become more than just a piece of equipment—it's a catalyst for growth, learning, and better outcomes. *"We have fun scanning on this system," she says. "It's changed the way we work."*

"The new scanner has definitely increased our efficiency and throughput at this facility."



Jamie Robel
Radiology Manager
Lee Memorial Hospital in Fort Myers, FL

It's more than the expanded cardiac imaging capabilities that have impressed the team. "Our stroke protocols and our perfusion scans are much more efficient too," adds Leon. "Previously, we had to inject more contrast to get the same scan done because we would have to do it in what we call two different slabs. With the new scanner we can get it all done in one scan. Not only are we able to reduce the amount of contrast that we're injecting into the patient, but we can also reduce the time that they're on the table. This is so important for stroke patients because those extra minutes saved can mean a lot for patient care."



Daisy Leon, Lead CT Technologist, Lee Memorial Hospital in Fort Myers, FL

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