Pella Regional Health Center:
Structured Reporting for Radiology

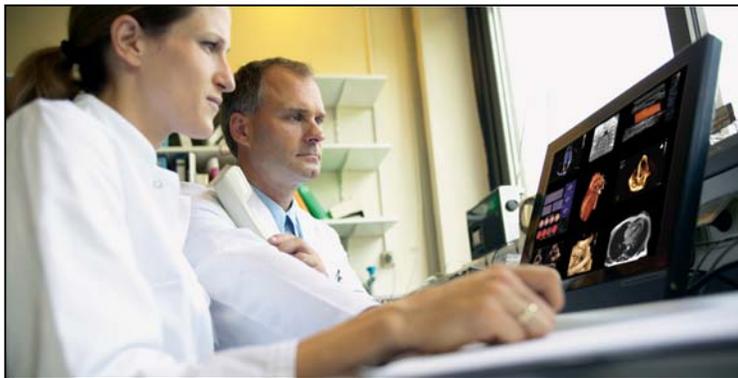Alison Smith, DO   Ian Moore, IT Support Manager

DIGISONICS
Mastering the art of interpretation

Structured reporting is the standardization of the language and organization of patient reports. Implementing a structured reporting system enables facilities to dramatically improve the accuracy and clarity of their reports as well as overall report turnaround times. Of all the hospital departments, radiology has had the hardest time embracing structured reporting, one of the great advances of medicine's digital revolution. Although in fairness, radiology departments aren't wholly to blame—until recently, the awkward workflows of existing structured reporting systems overcomplicated radiologists' lives and the systems couldn't comprehensively manage the wide array of study types radiology routinely demands. Fortunately, that has changed. Digisonics, a Houston-based company that has provided cutting-edge image management and structured reporting solutions for 40 years, has delivered their DigiView Structured Reporting System for Radiology, an easy to use, comprehensive system that brings the full benefits of structured reporting to all radiology study types.

Among the first radiology departments to adopt Digisonics DigiView Structured Reporting System was the one at Pella Regional Health Center in Pella, Iowa. Doctors Lee Henry and Alison Smith lead the department. Pella is a rural hospital committed to providing top-quality care. Determined to deliver on that commitment, they strive to keep their department on the leading edge of technological innovation, and more than a year ago, the two doctors decided to digitally automate and standardize their workflow. Working with Ian Moore, Pella's IT Support Manager, they examined the alternatives and opted for Digisonics.

Doctor Smith has been using Digisonics DigiView Structured Reporting System for Radiology ever since, and she's delighted with the benefits that have accrued to her department. "This is a really sophisticated system, and Digisonics has driven improvement through our entire department," she explained. "It allows Dr. Henry and me to better manage the quality of our department output, and it improved the work of all of our sonographers. With Digisonics, our product is more consistent and of higher quality."

Among its many features, the Digisonics autopopulates biometry data that technicians formerly entered by hand, which completely eliminates one source of human input error and takes far less time. "Because the sonographers aren't entering data, it allows extra time to describe what they saw, and that has contributed to their learning on a case by case basis," explained Doctor Smith. "It has forced them to discuss topics to become consistent and standardize the quality of the reports they are responsible for.

"With Digisonics, we now have confidence that every report leaving our department looks the same in respect to high quality, and two radiologists putting out similar reports is a plus for our referring physicians. They don't have to get used to each of us doing things differently."

Doctor Smith appreciates the McKesson PACS integration with Digisonics, which "removed another node of human input error we used to have with sonographers," and the speed at which medical information flows. "The instant we digitally sign a Digisonics report, it automatically distributes to the patient's medical

record as well as the referring physician. Our turnaround time is usually within the same day. Often, our referring physicians get a professional report in just an hour or two, sometimes within minutes. I love that."

According to Doctor Smith, some radiology departments might be reluctant to adopt structured reporting because of the inherent difficulty of adapting to change, but her department experienced no major problems switching to the DigiView Structured Reporting System. "Our department adapted well," she said. "It took a couple of months to complete the transition, working on the front end to build up our macros, templates, and dictionaries, but after that, we were off to the races. Everyone is really comfortable with it now, and it has definitely raised the quality of our care."

Pella's IT Support Manager, Ian Moore, also thought the switch to Digisonics went smoothly. "Any 'go-live' has issues," he noted, "but they have above average customer service. When we needed it, we had three heads of department dialed into our system giving us instant feedback. Plus, they're good about releasing patches and moving the system forward.

"The big thing about Digisonics from my perspective is that they're an all-in-one solution," he said. "Digisonics is the first fully integrated system that includes cardiac, vascular, OB/GYN and general ultrasound. Nothing is left out. Digisonics integrates with our PACS, it's easy to use, with minimal clicks, a streamlined workflow, and best of all, with Digisonics, human input error goes out the window."

Doctor Smith agrees with Moore's thoughts about the importance of integration. "We wanted integration, and Digisonics provided it. Digisonics works well with McKesson without any extra manipulation. I access patient records and studies with just one click," she said.

Expounding on the benefits, IT Support Manager Ian Moore pointed out the "stored data element of structured reporting that's another big advantage. With Digisonics, all our studies and reports go into a database. You can query the database which is a big help with meaningful use regulations and helps us with our insurers, who know where to find everything we're doing. It's an institutional memory, and it's very powerful."

Pella Regional Health Center uses Digisonics remote capabilities to conduct ultrasound exams at a satellite clinic in Ottumwa, Iowa, about an hour away from the hospital. Moore coordinated the extension of services, and he's impressed with Digisonics remote performance. "As far as I can tell, there is absolutely no difference whatsoever between our onsite and offsite capabilities. They're exactly the same in Ottumwa as they are here in the hospital, and as a business, those remote capabilities allows us to expand our services easily should other opportunities arise. Nobody else can do that like Digisonics.

"For medicine, this stuff is a paradigm shift, it's in process right now, and I find it all pretty exciting," he concluded.

Looking back on the last year, Doctor Alison Smith has been very pleased with the impact the Digisonics radiology package has made on her department. "Structured reporting is about quality control, and it's the wave of the future, a vast improvement for the entire profession," she said, summing up her feelings. "Even though we're a rural hospital here at Pella, we have high intentions for our patients, and with Digisonics, I'd like to think we're on par with anybody in the country."