

CoActiv, LLC

Life Cycles HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Medical Technology Breakthrough

Ed Heere wasn't about to let a second golden opportunity slip by.

"Before personal computers hit the market in a big way in the early 1980's, I had a chance to do something special," said the 58-year-old resident of Redding and president and CEO of Ridgefield-based CoActiv Medical Business Solutions. "But I didn't do what my instincts told me and it was a mistake. I told myself that I would never again hesitate to go for something that I knew would be a winner."

The "winner" in this instance is what Heere calls a revolutionary Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS) called EXAM-PACS. While other companies, such as General Electric, Phillips and Fuji produce PACS for the medical profession, Co-Active's product is much more affordable--costing typically less than a third the price of existing PACS, said Heere. This allows imaging centers and hospitals that previously could not afford the time- and cost-saving system to jump into the marketplace.



*Edward C. Heere, President
and CEO, CoActiv, LLC*

Approximately 70 percent of the radiological industry still uses film for its testing purposes because of the cost of PACS technology. This traditional process is more time consuming and less flexible than a PACS system. The benefits of a PACS is that scans and X-ray files can be archived indefinitely as opposed to film, which can be kept for only a certain period of time.

"Many of our competitors are selling their systems for around \$1 million or more," said Heere. "We're pricing ours at around \$300,000 and that is for a system we feel offers more than those selling for a lot more money."

Heere said EXAM-PACS, which was a number of months in the design, programming and testing phases, retains all of the mandatory functionality of traditional PACS products, while adding a number of new features. These include the ability to instantly forward exams to colleagues for consultation or instantly send exams to referring physicians for review, immediate access of any number of attached files, and burn a custom EXAM-CD, complete with a custom viewer.

Key to reducing the cost of EXAM-PACS, said Heere, is the use of readily available and inexpensive PCs and PC servers, which are easy to install and maintain. Co-Active's system can be installed within four to six weeks, he added.

Heere believes that being a small company not burdened by high operational costs and one that is willing to think out of the box, were major factors in developing EXAM-PACS.

"We are a small company and we started with no preconceived notions of what a PACS should be," said Heere, who designed, sourced and imported one of the first IBM compatible PC systems in 1982. "We decided to let the end user decide what we should put into our PACS."

Another strength of Co-Active, said Heere, is that the company is an affiliate of AMSYS, Inc., which allows it to call upon the experience and expertise of its sister company. AMSYS has nearly 20 years of providing IT products, services and support to hundreds of healthcare providers.

EXAM-PACS made a splash at December's Radiological Society of North America Conference in Chicago, where it was a buzz among the 60,000 or so individuals attending the conference. The system was first installed at Brewster, N.Y.'s Northeast Radiology, one of the top imaging centers in the country, according to the publication, "Health, Imaging and IT."

Scott Nadel, president of Northeast Radiology, said EXAM-PACS has resulted in "an incredible savings in time, expense and frustration levels. We are finally able to easily and quickly move images to the radiologist instead of moving the radiologist to the images."

EXAM-PACS is currently being installed at Northern Westchester Hospital, while several other imaging centers around the country are considering purchase of the system, said Heere. Co-Active has also been contacted about its new product by medical centers in a number of foreign countries.

Heere anticipates a significant growth in his company because of EXAM-PACS. He moved his businesses out of a basement office in 1992, and now employs some 25 people at Co-Active MBS, AMSYS Computer and AMSYS Consulting.

"EXAM-PACS has tremendous implications for the medical profession because of the cost savings involved," said Heere. "We can really reduce the cost of medical care, help the financial health and vitality of radiology imaging centers and departments, and aid in the delivery of improved medical care."

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