

## Radiology Today

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Reading Room at 30,000 Feet

*By Jim Knaub*

A friend in the PACS business called me from his hotel in the Bahamas using his magicJack, laptop, and the hotel Internet service. He told me he had downloaded two CT exams to his iPhone during the flight using the WiFi service on the plane.

Listen carefully. Is that the sound of paradigm shifting?

Ed Heere, president and CEO of CoActiv Medical Business Solutions, was on vacation with his wife, and as he explained it, "only working about five hours a day."

Ed and I meet for breakfast at RSNA every year and also yak by phone now and again about radiology and the PACS business. Letting me know that he was preparing to lounge by the pool with an umbrella-topped boat drink—while I was back in Pennsylvania slugging it out with winter between the midweek snowstorm and the forecast weekend blizzard—was just a perk. Ed was really excited about his company's Exam-PACS iPhone and iPad apps—and his thoughts that this type of Web-enabled, wireless tablet technology may transform healthcare information exchange.

CoActiv announced its iPad app two days after Steve Jobs unveiled his new tablet product to the world. (Heere also pointed out that the OsiriX development team had announced that its open-source DICOM viewer software for the iPad would soon be available.) There was a certain amount of showmanship in the release announcing the tablet app because the iPad app is basically the company's existing iPhone app that will be modified to utilize the bigger screen of the forthcoming tablet to facilitate direct communication between the iPad and a CoActiv PACS. Still, he had a sense that the components needed for a major change might be in place. And that's how such advances work. Various tablet PCs have been around for years—just as gymnasiums, balls, and peach baskets all existed for some time before they coalesced into the glory that is basketball.

As we talked, Heere recounted that it took him five minutes to download two CT exams (consisting of about 350 images) using the airliner's WiFi. If he were a radiologist and it had been an emergency—at least, more of an emergency than escaping a northern winter to Bahamian warmth—he could have reviewed the images in flight. In a practical sense, viewing a radiology exam on the tiny screen of an iPhone is something you'd only do in an emergency. But if you enlarge that to the iPad's 10-inch screen, the picture changes.

Heere suggested putting off an iPad purchase until the 3G network-enabled iPad model comes along later this year (the first models will offer WiFi access only), but he sees this as the beginning of something significant. "I think the iPad will make people rethink how they handle medical information," Heere said.

I believe the iPad and its offspring have fabulous long-term potential as a way to access and review information from the cloud. I don't think it will have the rocket ascension the iPhone did but will steadily grow into a major way people interact with data—be it text information, digital images, movies, games, or health information.