

vRad™ c o n n e c t i o n s

FROM VIRTUAL RADIOLOGIC
Extending radiology. Improving life.™

SPRING 2009

IN THIS ISSUE



INTERVIEW — PAGE 2-4

Trust Your Patients and Your Reputation to vRad
*Interview with Ben Strong, M.D. (ABR, ABIM),
vRad Quality Assurance Committee member*

DETAILS — PAGE 5

Our Quality Assurance Process

*Learn how our industry-leading protocol enables us to
provide responsive, reliable, high-quality interpretations*

IN THE NEWS — PAGE 6

vRad Ranked #1 by Your Peers
*vRad ranked the Top Teleradiology
Services Category Leader by KLAS,
a leading independent healthcare
research firm*



w e l c o m e

Welcome to **connections**, the newsletter designed to keep you updated on best practices in teleradiology and informed about what's going on at Virtual Radiologic (vRad).



Eduard Michel, M.D.

At vRad, Quality is Assured

Have you thought about how much a misdiagnosis would cost you? Is this a risk your hospital or practice is willing to take? As a radiology organization, how can you trust that your teleradiology partner and its radiologists meet or exceed current industry standards?

In this issue of **connections**, we will discuss why **quality is assured** when you work with vRad. We will focus on the people and processes dedicated to upholding our high quality standards, which demonstrate our commitment to patient safety and quality care for our clients. Quality is more than a goal or a "commitment" at vRad. Quality is defined by our industry-leading service standards, our excellent reporting, and our thorough assurance procedures.

Case in point: I'm honored to announce that our quality efforts have been formally recognized by KLAS, which ranked vRad the Top Teleradiology Services Provider. You'll see more about this client-based recognition on the last page of this newsletter.

You put your trust in us to serve as an extension of your radiology group. That trust drives us to hold ourselves to a higher quality standard, far above the norm — even beyond The Joint Commission standards and industry quality assurance guidelines. Anything less can put you and your patients at risk.

Read on to learn more about the sophisticated tools and procedures that shape our quality model. If you have any questions about the information shared here or any aspect of our service to you, send an e-mail to connections@virtualrad.com. We appreciate every opportunity to connect with you.

Eduard Michel, M.D.

Medical Director and Founder

In Healthcare, Quality Always Matters

i n t e r v i e w



Did You Know?

*New Standards from
The Joint Commission (TJC)
Require QA Program*

The new standards introduced this January by TJC call for our radiologists to be evaluated through Focused Practitioner Practice Evaluations (FPPE). The standard allows for a more focused review of the practitioner's performance, as well as the monitoring of new privileges that are granted. The Elements of Performance included in the standard state that there must be a method, time frame, and process for conducting the reviews, as well as provisions for communicating the findings to the practitioners. *Note: Your teleradiology partner must have a QA program to be accredited by TJC.*

By meeting the new standard, you have added confidence in vRad's dedication to deliver teleradiology's highest level of services. If you have questions or need compliance program information, contact us at 1.800.737.0610.



**Benjamin W. Strong,
M.D. (ABR, ABIM)**

Trust Your Patients and Your Reputation to vRad

An Interview with vRad Quality

Assurance Committee member

Benjamin Strong, M.D. (ABR, ABIM)

What most differentiates vRad's QA program from other teleradiology QA programs?

Several components elevate our QA program above the norm, but the source of our true QA power is our quality metrics database, which is a repository for all the QA information we've collected over the past five years.

It's remarkable the ways we can work with the information to benefit our clients and advance our services. For example, the data helps us with staff scheduling, because we can tailor each radiologist's workload to his or her optimal performance level. In addition, because the data holds such a wealth of QA information, it is an invaluable resource in advancing our staff education – at both an individual and group level. The data also helps us match the right radiologist with the right client, creating an ideal spirit of collaboration that clients tell us is one of the things they most value about working with vRad.

How does the information benefit vRad's clients?

Our rigorous QA process is an essential part of providing the reliable coverage and quality patient care you need. Based on the client's preference, we provide detailed teleradiology QA reports either monthly or quarterly. The metrics in our reports help confirm the high level of quality vRad provides to our clients, for every image, every day. It's evidence that our clients have placed a priority on quality – on not settling for less. The detail includes discrepancies categorized based on major and minor misses. It also denotes the percentage of discrepancies as compared to total number of cases read for that client.

Continued on page 3

What's an example of how vRad exceeds the norm?

In addition to being available during their shift, all of our radiologists are available for a half-hour after their shift ends in case the referring clinician needs to reach them for clarification. This added measure of responsiveness underscores our commitment to our clients – helping them serve their patients well.

How does vRad grade discrepancies?

We use a 5-point rating scale that grades the discrepancy based on severity; but that's just one small aspect of our coding modules. The standard coding determines discrepancy severity based on how visually obvious a miss is. An aortic dissection or laceration, for example, can be very subtle and may only be seen in a few images of a thousand-image study. vRad's coding would rate that as a 4 out of 5 because it is acutely life threatening. Our priority is the potential effect on patient outcomes.

What's more, we go beyond our basic 5-point coding metric with an A, B, or C to denote "acute change in care," "chronic change in care," or "no change in care." This coding better helps relate the discrepancy to the patient outcome.

Do vRad radiologists see their own accuracy reports?

Indeed. Each vRad radiologist knows exactly where he or she is on our accuracy graph. In addition, our QA Committee uses the reports extensively to spot trends in the radiologist's performance. This knowledge gives us the specific insight to take action immediately – adjusting workload, coaching specific radiologists, and arranging for CMEs as needed.

Continued on page 4

Know Your Risk: How vRad Delivers Critical Detail

vRad's 5-point rating scale:

- 1 = A missed finding with no significant clinical consequences or required follow-up.
- 2 = A typical missed finding causing a delay in diagnosis but no significant adverse acute patient outcomes.
- 3 = A missed finding with a significant affect on acute patient management.
- 4 = Conspicuous missed finding of life-threatening significance to patient management.
- 5 = Gross negligence.

How vRad Enhances the Standard

vRad supplements our 5-point scale with an **ADDITIONAL 3-points** that deliver a level of detail better defining discrepancies in terms of patient outcomes:

- A = acute change in care
- B = chronic change in care
- C = no change in care

vRad's QA process is changing the paradigm of quality care and the services you provide to patients; giving you more accurate and actionable discrepancy analysis.



Would you elaborate on the educational aspect to the data you collect?

We are dedicated to elevating the performance of our radiologists at every opportunity. Whenever the QA Review Committee determines that there is a relevant educational point based on a valid discrepancy, we work with the concerned radiologist to improve his or her knowledge specific to that issue. Perhaps it is changing the search pattern the radiologist uses to identify issues. Perhaps it is adjusting the radiologist's workload. And when we identify an educational issue that our entire team would benefit from knowing, we issue a global notice to inform all 140 vRad radiologists.

Case by case, we have a comprehensive wealth of knowledge and best practices that direct our radiologists every day. When we identify an issue, we get the word out quickly.

About Benjamin Strong, M.D. — An American Board Certified radiologist and internist, Dr. Strong received his medical degree from the University of Arizona College of Medicine. He is a member of the vRad Quality Assurance Committee and Assistant Clinical Professor of Radiology, UAHSC.



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Mitigating Your Risk Level: vRad Goes Beyond the Gold Standard

By complying with TJC's national standards for healthcare quality and safety, vRad has received TJC's Gold Seal of Approval.™ Having this accreditation gives you added security and peace of mind when it comes to treating your patients. It also validates that vRad is committed to providing our client partners with the highest level of teleradiology services.



vRad has made an extraordinary commitment to exceed TJC standards. vRad's Quality Assurance process undergoes periodic performance reviews by TJC. According to TJC, vRad goes above and beyond the standards needed to achieve Full Accreditation – the highest of TJC's six levels.

Examples of how vRad goes above and beyond TJC requirements

- 1) TJC standards do not specifically require the ambulatory care organization to primary source verify (PSV) all of the physician's past liability insurance. They allow querying the NPDB to assist with this to confirm prior reportable events. However, vRad verifies all liability coverage back to post graduate medical training directly with the primary source. This provides definitive proof of claims/no claims involving the physician.
- 2) TJC standards allow the ambulatory care organization to utilize AMA profiles to PSV the physician's education. vRad goes beyond this requirement and verifies all education, including undergraduate, directly with the institution as part of our PSV process. We also request transcripts from both the undergraduate program and medical school. TJC does not require this. This level of verification allows vRad to identify transfers from one school to another, or possible repeated medical school courses. Several state medical boards require that information, so it is needed to accurately assist the physicians with their applications.

What You Don't Know Can Cost You: Trust Your Patients and Your Reputation to vRad

The more you know about your teleradiology provider's quality, the more confident you can be in that provider to serve your patients on behalf of your organization.

Quality is paramount at vRad. Dr. Eduard Michel, our medical director, oversees our comprehensive quality process and our 12-member Quality Assurance (QA) Review Committee. Each of the members is a practicing vRad radiologist selected to ensure a complete cross-section of all radiology subspecialties.

The discrepancy protocol is outlined here:

Reporting. In the event that a vRad client disagrees with the report issued by a vRad consulting radiologist, the client notes the disagreement on the vRad interpretation and then faxes it to a confidential QA fax number with a copy of the final report.

Review. The report is entered into the quality metrics database and the case is independently reviewed by the consulting vRad radiologist and at least one member of the QA Review Committee. The committee member rates the case based on vRad's advanced alpha-numeric scale. (See the interview article in this newsletter for insights into the rating method.)

Appeal. The vRad consulting radiologist can question, clarify, or disagree with the QA Review Committee's rating. In this example, the case may be assigned to another committee member for re-review.

If the ratings stand, the committee member will discuss the findings with the consulting radiologist as an educational opportunity. If the QA Review Committee believes that the vRad radiologist's interpretation is correct, the outcome is noted in the client's monthly report.

Client Notification. Clients may request communication with the QA Review Committee one of two ways: They can request an acknowledgement of the case in writing



"The quality of reads is of utmost importance. We weren't getting that with our previous teleradiology provider... and it cost us four important clients. But vRad demonstrates a commitment to quality and customer satisfaction that we can trust every time."

Mindy Goldsmith, PhD, CRA
Bladen County Hospital
Elizabethtown, NC

with the final designation of the case faxed or sent electronically to the client. Or, the client may request a verbal follow up from a committee member.

The QA data* collected through this process is used to create the monthly or quarterly reports provided to client QA committees. See the Ben Strong, M.D., interview article for the many other ways vRad uses this data to continue to advance quality throughout the organization.

vRad, Leading Quality Standards for Final Interpretations

All final interpretations that vRad performs are subject to an over-read process. One percent of the finals are randomly selected daily and over-read by the QA Review Committee. Any discrepancies are categorized as final over-reads and are brought to the attention of the reading radiologist who may issue an addendum to the report if they believe one is necessary.

* The data is aggregated as appropriate to ensure compliance with HIPAA and state privacy laws.



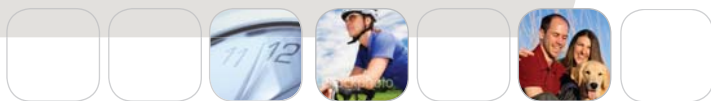


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in the news

vRad Ranked #1 by Your Peers

vRad has been ranked the top Teleradiology Services Category Leader by KLAS, a leading independent healthcare research firm. This ranking measures performance based on customer service and interviews conducted by KLAS and published in the organization's 2008 Top 20 Best in KLAS Awards: Software & Professional Services* report.

The annual year-end report is a summary of performance data and evaluations collected from healthcare organizations, including hospital and clinic administrators and directors. The ranking was created to help you make smart buying decisions by identifying the healthcare industry's top-performing companies, products, and services.

KLAS conducts its research by contacting organizations like yours to participate in a survey involving vendor relationships and in-depth phone interviews.

The result? A ranking you can trust from people like you.

About KLAS: KLAS is an independent research firm specializing in monitoring and reporting the performance of healthcare vendors. For more information about KLAS, visit www.KLASresearch.com.



The chart below represents the percentage of clients responding to key satisfaction questions:



Source: Platinum KLAS, Jan. 27, 2009.
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