



# ASP YRA

## AccessNET Brings PACS Expertise to Brownfield Regional Medical Center

**B**RMC's visiting radiologist was reading 650 images per month on average during his one-to-three trips to Brownfield each week. When his services became unavailable in late 2004, BRMC was faced with two choices. The organization could find another visiting radiologist, despite it being difficult to attract a radiologist to visit a rural location. Or, BRMC could move toward a PACS solution.

"In a previous job I used a PACS solution and I knew that it would be the right choice for BRMC, but I thought there was no way that we could afford it," said Ben Meiwes, BRMC's radiology director. "Yet when we visited a nearby facility using Aspyra's AccessNET PACS solution, I was surprised that the power and functionality we needed actually fit within our budget."

The organization that Meiwes and his team visited was a local university medical center. "That visit ended up solving two of our challenges. First, it showed us that we could afford a PACS solution. Second, we discovered that once our PACS was installed, we could forward our images and have them read at the medical center," Meiwes added. "Everybody wants a PACS solution, but smaller and rural hospitals think they can't afford it. PACS pricing isn't the barrier that it once was, so smaller and rural hospitals really need to evaluate PACS purchases as a way to increase efficiency and reduce costs."

To get BRMC's board to approve the purchase, Meiwes demonstrated that the combined purchase of PACS and a computed radiography solution could deliver a complete return on investment in less than 4.5 years by eliminating the organization's \$25,000 annual cost of film and processing. The morning after the board approved the purchase in November 2004, Meiwes ordered the system from Aspyra through SourceOne, which is a distributor of AccessNET. BRMC completed implementing AccessNET in January 2005.

"It was a dream come true to have the system," Meiwes said. "As soon as we installed it, it was up and running and we could immediately connect to UMC and have them read our images."

BRMC has five physicians using AccessNET. Besides the hospital, BRMC has a rural health clinic in an attached building that uses AccessNET. Three of

### CHALLENGE

Brownfield Regional Medical Center (BRMC) in Texas immediately faced new challenges as its sole visiting radiologist from a nearby town could no longer travel to the organization to read images following an incapacitating stroke.

### SOLUTION

After evaluating Aspyra's AccessNET™ PACS at a nearby facility, BRMC was impressed with the system's capabilities and surprised to discover that the solution could fit within its budget.

### RESULTS

Now an entirely filmless facility, BRMC has the flexibility to have its images read by radiologists at virtually any location. Savings of \$25,000 per year in film and processing costs will enable BRMC to achieve 100% ROI on its PACS and computed radiography solutions in less than five years.

BRMC's physicians, who have their private practice offices across the street from the hospital, also have access to the PACS over a local area network. An enhanced benefit of using AccessNET is that the mobile MRI vehicle that visits BRMC can directly connect to AccessNET to upload images to the system.

Patient volume at BRMC has steadily risen due to the increased efficiency of the radiology department as a result of AccessNET, as well as the offering of the MRI services via the mobile imaging unit. Upon the initial installation of AccessNET, BRMC was sending roughly 800 images per month to the local university medical center for readings. That volume rose to the point where the medical center exceeded its capacity and began to outsource some of the readings to keep pace. As a result, the medical center has decided to discontinue offering the service to BRMC.

"The upside to this is that with AccessNET, we have options that we didn't have in the past, such as sending our images to other organizations for remote readings," Meiwes said. "In fact, as soon as the word got out that we were using AccessNET, organizations began to approach us and offer their remote reading services to us. Where we once had

a problem finding a radiologist to visit our rural location each week, we now have organizations approaching us with competitive bids."

One unexpected benefit is the impact that AccessNET has had on the health information management (HIM) and respiratory therapy departments. Initially, BRMC's radiology department enabled the HIM staff to have limited access to the PACS to view images and reports, as opposed to retrieving hard copies of patient records to review data. Before using AccessNET, the HIM department was using the one full-time equivalent (FTE) to retrieve and file records. After only a month of using AccessNET, the HIM department was able to redeploy one FTE to handle other tasks. Similar efficiency gains were realized by the respiratory therapy department upon using AccessNET to view images and reports.

"AccessNET was our organization's first foray into the digital world of medicine," said Mike Click, BRMC's CEO. "The success of this effort has encouraged us to find other areas where we can use technology to improve our operations and care delivery."

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