

## **The Innovators Have Spoken: Here are the Winning Entries in the 2018 Imaging Innovation Awards**

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Last spring *RBJ* put out a call for entrants to compete in its inaugural Imaging Innovation Awards. We opened the contest to all private radiology practices and hospital radiology departments that had recently completed a project combining creative thinking with coordinated teamwork to develop a notably original breakthrough in some particular aspect of medical imaging.

By the end of the entry period in the summer, we had received some 17 completed submissions. From these, our five judges—all daily radiology observers with zero vested interest in “IIA” outcomes—narrowed the field to nine finalists.

Next the panel weighted these worthy entries for footprint of entrant and degree of difficulty. This was only fair, as some smaller players with limited resources went up against some of the biggest and best-heeled kids on the block.

Finally, the judges voted, unaware of one another’s choices. Here are the winning entries, presented in alphabetical order.

### **KICKING QUALITY & SAFETY REPORTING UP A NOTCH**

By Advanced Radiology

One of the most critical components of high-quality care is safety. Open and candid communication among our team is the key to continuously improving the safety of the care we provide and the environment in which we work. As part of a company-wide initiative to ensure patient safety, quality of care and regulatory compliance, Advanced Radiology wanted to create an easy-to-use but robust reporting program. The program would need to a.) allow event reporting through the most popular channels, b.) be thoroughly intuitive so as to require little or no user training, and c.) allow for reporting of all necessary information for documentation and analysis of quality and safety events. Most important, it was essential that all staff saw this project as an effort to further increase patient safety and overall quality—not as a policing and punishment initiative.

**Aims and objectives:** Our primary goal was to improve communication of quality issues through an easy and simple process, allowing our radiologists to provide feedback to management that would help improve clinical performance and quality. We felt strongly that this would be the first step in creating a just culture in which fear of retribution or punishment did not diminish our ability to continually improve.

**Leadership and project management:** Our CMIO, Gerard Muro, MD, built the initial online platform and championed its further development. The project was then handed off to our director of quality, safety and compliance to enhance and grow. In collaboration with our internal IT team and an external developer, the team created a suite of reporting channels over the course of two months. The suite included a dedicated email address, phone hotline, paper form and iCare, our online safety event reporting application. Development involved creating a

compendium of quality and safety concerns, establishing impact levels, and establishing a set of event identifiers such as date, time, attending radiologist and patient ID where necessary. After thorough testing, a program introduction was made and usage instructions were distributed throughout the company.

**Key steps:** Estimated ideal reporting levels were calculated as a percentage of annual exam totals. An initial adoption period was estimated in which the company would reach those expected reporting levels. It was projected that the number of events reported through the program would rise until reaching the expected level, then slowly decrease as safety and quality measures became embedded in the company culture.

**Positive outcomes:** The number of reports increased as projected over the initial five months and continues to rise as it approaches projected percentages of total exams. The online application also allows for export of data for reporting, tracking and analysis, which helps us identify and implement procedural improvements.

**Innovative elements:** From ideation to construction to adoption, this project leveraged the talents of our compliance, IT and marketing teams to define the challenge, develop a comprehensive solution and successfully promote its use. Central to the success of our project was a focus on two principles: 1. Though our primary goal was to improve communication around quality issues, we knew this effort could be leveraged to realize the larger goal of creating a just culture in which each individual shared responsibility for the overall quality, safety and compliance of the practice's operations. Recognizing the inherent fear of self-reporting and creating a system in which there was no punishment mechanism allowed us to build and grow our user base. 2. By understanding that different people prefer different methods of communication and incorporating those methods into our system, we maximized the ease of use for each individual. This accommodated staff member of all age groups and technical abilities.

*Submitted by Bob Evangelista, marketing manager. Advanced Radiology is based in Shelton, Conn.*

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**'We have always cherished the belief that if you are not innovating, you are not growing and advancing the mission.**

This belief is crucial to building a culture of innovation and inquisitiveness. We constantly touch and evaluate all phases of our practice to ensure we're doing things better and more effectively.

The goal has to be a better outcome and experience for our patients, our referrers and our community. The best way to do this is to eliminate barriers and encourage our staff to be involved and help us in building a better model. In the end, everyone's professional satisfaction and engagement increases.'

Clark Yoder, MD, Chief Executive Officer, Advanced Radiology