

Long-Standing Customer-Vendor Partnership Brings Next-Generation PACS Technology to Market

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Vendor relationships can sometimes be mundane and ordinary, the kind that involve minimum communication and a lack of understanding of the visions and goals of each organization.

The connection between Minneapolis-based North Memorial Health and FUJIFILM Medical Systems U.S.A., Inc., however, is something else entirely. When North Memorial had a vision for a next-generation PACS technology, Fujifilm moved full steam ahead to bring the innovation to life.

Lee Kupczynski, a veteran PACS administrator for North Memorial Health, says the tight bond between vendor and health system is unlike anything else he has seen in his more than two decades in the healthcare industry. He first got to know Fujifilm when North Memorial Health installed the company's Synapse® Radiology PACS in 2005 and Synapse Mobility Enterprise Viewer in 2018—and that experience made quite the impression on Kupczynski and his colleagues.

“We’ve grown so close with Fujifilm that they feel like family now,” he says. “We care about them and they care about us. We know about their families, they know about our families and it’s a real comfortable relationship.”

The feeling is clearly mutual. Fujifilm worked closely with North Memorial Health on the development of one of its biggest solutions, Synapse Cardiology PACS



North Memorial Health

version 5.6.1, by tapping into the North Memorial Health team for input developing the new platform's advanced reporting features. The company even selected North Memorial Health to be the first site in the United States to go live with the solution once it was ready for primetime.

“We’re grateful that North Memorial Health’s technology roadmap aligns with ours, and that we have the ability to collaborate with such a forward-thinking partner,” said Tim Thomas, vice president of cardiology for Fujifilm Medical Systems U.S.A., Inc. “The developments we make together based on input and feedback from North Memorial Health clinicians can lead better care collaboration and increased efficiencies in cardiac care, a specialty that currently treats more than 92 million Americans.”

A cardiologist’s dream come true

Synapse Cardiology PACS was designed to simultaneously streamline cardiologists' workflow, image review and advanced reporting, eliminating bottlenecks and allowing more efficient care to flourish. According to Osama A. Ibrahim, MD, an interventional cardiologist at North Memorial Health Heart & Vascular Center, Fujifilm achieved all of those goals—and then some—with this latest breakthrough.

“With the pressing challenges of our day—how thin our time is spread and so on—you want a system that helps you instead of hindering you,” Ibrahim says. “That’s exactly what Synapse Cardiology is. It’s a customizable platform with time-saving reporting features, which is key when you’re talking about patients being treated in a cath lab.”

Ibrahim is also quick to praise how Synapse immediately led to improvements in patient communication. High-quality images can be printed, accessed, and shared on the spot with the patient, a feature that gives credence to the old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. Ibrahim describes this as “incredibly important,” as it helps the patient to better understand their treatment plan and be more satisfied with their care delivery as a result.

“We can place a stent, but if the patient is going to continue with their lifestyle without making any changes, they’re going to end up right back in the hospital again,” he says. “Showing them ‘before’ and ‘after’ images can help prevent that from happening—it’s priceless to be able to show them changes in their own body.”

Another feature Ibrahim loves about Synapse Cardiology PACS is the convenience Fujifilm built into the system.

“I appreciate that you can even access it from home if necessary, instead of being limited to the cath lab,” he says. “That mobility is a great feature and makes a big difference for cardiologists.”

The all-important IT perspective

Cindy Berg, a cardiovascular IT specialist for North Memorial Health, notes that Synapse Cardiology PACS is also incredibly user-friendly; exemplifying how much care was put into its development. Physicians are thrilled with the upgrade, she says, because Fujifilm listened as suggestions were made throughout the development process.

“Because the templates were configured by Fujifilm to look exactly as our providers wanted them, physicians are able to move through the system rather quickly,” Berg says. “Cardiologists and surgeons have everything right there at their fingertips.”

The solution’s user-friendly design and server-side rendering capabilities also help the health system to save costs and run a more manageable infrastructure. And since North Memorial Health had already installed other Fujifilm solutions, employees see additional benefits from the implementation of Synapse Cardiology PACS. Using a single PACS platform for cardiology and radiology reporting has been especially helpful, Kupczynski notes, as it helps North Memorial Health get one step closer to its goal of running a ‘one-stop solution’ for all imaging studies.”

“Before this change, we were using solutions from many vendors,” Kupczynski says. “As an organization, we’re now able to save a lot of time and money by working just with Fujifilm.”

Owning the entire process

Speaking with numerous North Memorial Health representatives, it becomes clear that Fujifilm has thought through every step a health system goes through when it decides to consider a new solution. As Ibrahim puts it, the company “owns the entire process, from beginning to end.”

Developing Synapse Cardiology PACS, for instance, involved working closely with a wide variety of stakeholders, and speaks to how even the smallest change can impact patient care. North Memorial Health provided feedback, which was used to further

enhance the overall PACS platform. North Memorial Health was then able to analyze the entire system all over again. When it was time to install the new solution, Fujifilm ensured everything was working optimally from start to finish.

“In the past, I’ve had vendors promise the sun and the moon and then not offer any of the specific details I was actually looking for in the first place,” Ibrahim says. “With Fujifilm, we just didn’t have that problem. In fact, they stayed with us for a full week after the installation to take on any feedback we may have had. They wanted to know everything was up and running and that we were all happy.”

According to Berg, another key difference between Fujifilm and other vendors she has encountered is how well-versed its employees are in the work being done.

“It was so nice how many of the people we worked with already had a background in cardiology,” she says. “They can speak the language, they already know so much about what the physicians are looking for and what they need—it’s been really nice.”