



Merge Case Study

St. Mary's Hospital

MERGE
An IBM Company

The Road to Interoperability

Merge PACS™ | Merge Cardio™ | Merge Hemo™ | iConnect® Access | iConnect Enterprise Archive
St. Mary's Hospital | Athens, GA

CUSTOMER PROFILE

- St. Mary's Hospital, located in Athens, GA, is a non-profit Catholic system whose mission is to be a compassionate healing presence in their community
- St. Mary's is a 199-bed facility that performs about 100,000 imaging procedures per year

CUSTOMER CHALLENGES

- Improve critical results delivery across the enterprise
- Eliminate workflow challenges and decrease report turnaround time in cardiology department
- Consolidate cardiology and radiology PACS into one archive for easy image access via their EMR

SUCCESS WITH MERGE

- Customizable real-time worklists have improved results delivery and speed to treatment
- Went from up to six days to one day for report-turnaround time with cardiology digital reporting
- Consolidated silos and centralized storage so cardiology and radiology images could be accessed via their EMR and reliably stored in one location

Long-Standing Partner

Since 2003, St. Mary's, who performs about 100,000 imaging procedures per year, has selected five Merge solutions to help them address workflow challenges, improve report turnaround time, speed critical results delivery, and better execute image storage and management. "We believe that working with Merge for all of our enterprise imaging and interoperability needs helps St. Mary's be a better provider. We have one number to call for any question, any issue. That simplifies my busy days and to be honest, I look at Merge as our partner...we're in this together and they haven't let me down yet," said Brian Duncan, Manager of Radiology Services and PACS Administrator at St. Mary's.

Faster Results and Easy Image Access

St. Mary's originally installed Merge PACS to eliminate the use of cumbersome film-based studies and "go digital." The industry has come a long way since then and Merge PACS continues to provide physicians with easy access to images, but the way they use it has gotten more sophisticated. "By far the biggest selling feature is the real-time worklist. It's completely customizable and allows us to easily manage daily workloads by role, task or credentials so radiologists only see the images they need to read," said Duncan.

Additionally, critical findings can be flagged and shown in a color-coded, interactive worklist to showcase studies that need immediate attention. St. Mary's also uses Merge PACS for critical imaging areas, such as the emergency room so ER physicians can see where a patient is within the workflow. "I manage ten systems throughout St. Mary's and this is by far the easiest to manage."

From there, St. Mary's purchased Merge Cardio, with the long-term goal to have radiology and cardiology on the same archive so both types of images could be read from their MEDITECH EMR. It ultimately played out that way, but it took a few years to get there.

In June 2011, St. Mary's installed Merge Cardio, a cardiology PACS, and followed a year later with Merge Hemo, a cardiac cath lab documentation and monitoring tool. Their cardiology department consists of five echo labs, four vascular labs and three cath labs...all which help to produce 40 studies total every day, Monday-Friday.

“Consolidating silos was the driving force behind our iConnect purchases.

We wanted to save storage costs and enhance workflow by being able to pull both radiology and cardiology studies through our EMR.”

Brian Duncan, Manager of Radiology Services and PACS Administrator, St. Mary's

They turned to Merge Cardio for many reasons, but what they needed the most help with was digital reporting. “We had huge issues with getting images to docs to read in a timely manner. Sometimes it would take six days before a study was dictated. There was no real workflow in place.”

Merge Cardio, a centralized web-enabled system, gives physicians and staff access to patients’ digital integrated cardiovascular records, while also streamlining report generation and distribution...across all cardiology modalities. It helped St. Mary’s automate the cardiology reporting process so reports can be generated, reviewed and confirmed anywhere, any time.

Within three months of being live, “we went from absolute chaos to under 24 hours report turnaround with echo and vascular consistently.” Now that everything is automated, they don’t lose as many charges as they used to. In the past, Medicare would deny some charges due to incomplete or missing reports. “Merge Cardio has made our lives easier, changed the culture and has helped with workflow and workload. It allows us to stay on top of things at all times,” explained Duncan.

When techs QC exams, Merge Cardio enables them to assign studies, which is helpful with workload balancing. Cardiologists also enjoy the ability to read off site...from the office to home, all they have to do is log in from their PC.

Merge Hemo gives St. Mary’s staff the ability to capture information through a simple touch-screen user interface at the point of care, leading to better reporting and—most importantly—enhanced patient care. “Merge Hemo is so easy to use with its iPad-like interface.” By using Merge Cardio and Merge Hemo en tandem, data flows seamlessly into the report from Merge Cardio so it captures report data. “Merge Hemo has made our flow smoother, assists with inventory control and has made documentation so easy.” It has also helped St. Mary’s capture data required by the ACC for the CathPCI registry.

As noted above, St. Mary’s wanted to consolidate their radiology and cardiology archives and give staff the ability to view both types of images via their MEDITECH EMR, inside or outside of the hospital. Enter iConnect Access, a zero-download image viewer, and iConnect Enterprise Archive, Merge’s long-term vendor-neutral archive (VNA), which also acts as a backbone for an enterprise imaging strategy.

“Consolidating silos was the driving force behind our iConnect purchases. We wanted to save storage costs and enhance workflow by being able to pull both types of studies through our EMR.” They have been benefitting ever since they installed in early 2013.

Not having to manage a PACS client in multiple locations has been a huge win for St. Mary’s...and has allowed for a much more controlled environment. “Because iConnect Access runs on any browser, I have not had any support calls from docs. It’s easy to operate and user- friendly. It’s nice to have two viewers...Merge PACS for the more advanced PACS users and iConnect Access for the clinicians who just need to see their images quickly and easily.”

Before, Duncan had to make sure all of the 1,200 computers across the system were up-to-date to run Merge PACS. Now he only has to worry about 30 computers...the rest have iConnect Access installed so staff has image access within their EHR workflow, anywhere, any time. iConnect Enterprise Archive has helped St. Mary’s archive their enterprise-wide images from disparate PACS, for a consolidated patient view that allows access to current and historical images at the

point of care. “We also practice information lifecycle management with our VNA, which allows us to manage our images from the day they are created until they are purged. We’re always able to monitor our storage use and costs and know we can depend on the reliability, availability and security of the image data.”

Success with Merge

Clearly the five Merge solutions St. Mary’s has installed over the past several years speaks to their success with workflow challenges, report turnaround time, critical results delivery, and image storage and management. They are well on their way to being an interoperable organization, which enables St. Mary’s to share their health information across other sites and with other entities. “We are a very happy client. Not only do they provide top-notch support and training, but they have helped us become more “connected” within our organization and with the community as well,” Duncan said.

About Merge

Merge is a leading provider of clinical systems and innovations that seek to transform healthcare. Merge’s enterprise and cloud-based solutions for image intensive specialties provide access to any image, anywhere, any time. Merge also provides health stations, clinical trials software and other health data and analytics solutions that engage consumers in their personal health. With solutions that are used by providers and consumers and include more than 25 years of innovation, Merge is helping to reduce costs and improve the quality of healthcare worldwide.

These Merge solutions are not FDA cleared for diagnostic use on mobile devices.

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