



5 Ways to Enhance Practice Service & Revenue

A RESOURCE FROM



VIDERE[®]

INSIGHTFUL ON-SITE DIAGNOSTICS

Introduction

What Can I Expect?

In today's medical practice environment—where *quality, patient care, cost* and *profitability* are critical factors for success—physicians and practice managers are looking for different ways to deliver new and existing services to enhance practice performance and offer more value to patients.

While there is no one silver bullet to improve performance, medical practices are investigating the service and economic benefits of **on-site diagnostics**. Many have chosen to offer **on-site ultrasound imaging** because of the advantages it provides their practices and patients.

Videre is a leading provider of high quality diagnostic ultrasound services to physician practices across the southeast. Videre employs Sonographers who maintain multiple registries with the ARDMS®. Videre is also accredited with the American College of Radiology (ACR®) and the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC®).

This white paper will explore how on-site diagnostic ultrasound service can benefit your practice in the areas of:

- Revenue and Profitability
- Patient Care and Compliance
- Office Staff Convenience
- Physician Control
- Patient Cost

**Read on to discover the benefits,
and thanks for downloading.**



BENEFIT 1

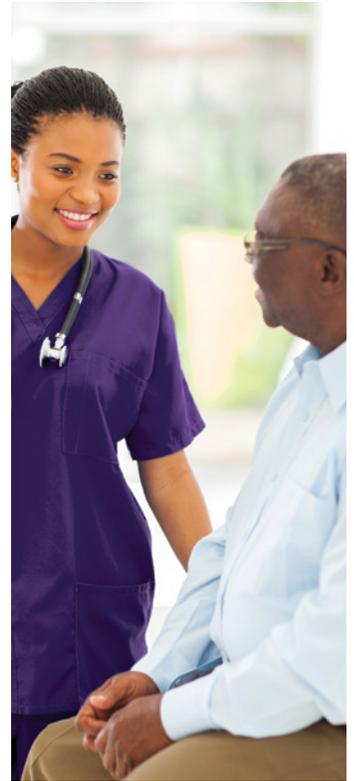
Increase Practice Revenue and Profitability

STOP REFERRING VALUABLE REVENUE OUT OF YOUR DOOR

Referring imaging outside of your primary care environment, to a hospital or other imaging center, is common practice for many medical groups. In some instances, this kind of referral is the best option for the medical practice and patient. However, if you are unintentionally adhering to this common referral practice, you may be costing your practice tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual revenue.

For example, a primary care medical practice serving an average of 50 patients per day may be foregoing \$60,000 or more of annual revenue associated with the referral of ultrasound outside of the practice.¹ Not only is valuable revenue walking out of the door, but you also may be inconveniencing your patients and staff.

In an environment where reimbursement and fee schedules are under pressure, shouldn't you consider whether on-site ultrasound service makes good business sense for the current and future health of your practice?



CASE STUDY

Internal Medicine Provider in Eastern North Carolina

This three-provider Internal Medicine Practice located in Eastern North Carolina, serving approximately 80 patients daily, historically referred patients to the local hospital. Initially, the Office Manager and the Physicians did not believe the practice had the ultrasound volume to support on-site diagnostic service.

However, after further review and a clinical “lunch-and-learn” provided by Videre, during which the appropriate use of ultrasound for the practice’s population of high risk and chronic disease patients was reviewed, the practice determined that it made good business sense to begin service one half-day per week. Within three months, the practice found it beneficial to its patients and its business to offer service three half-days per week, and was soon capturing \$150,000 in ultrasound referral revenue.

¹ Based on a sample of existing Videre customers with an average of three physician providers and fifty patient visits per day for the practice.

BENEFIT 2

Patient Care and Compliance

FOSTERING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE A PATIENT'S NEEDS ARE COORDINATED



On-site ultrasound service promotes convenient patient care. Patients (especially the elderly) prefer having procedures performed in the comfort of their primary care physicians' offices. It makes sense—if you had the choice between having a study completed at your primary care physician's office or some unfamiliar facility elsewhere, which would you choose?

In some instances, when a patient is referred to an alternative location for imaging, the patient does not follow through with the scheduled exam. Having the ultrasound exam performed in the physician's practice offers more accountability in the care process and more patient compliance with a physician's order. Physicians and medical staff will no longer waste valuable time determining whether an imaging study was completed and final results have been received.

When you refer patients who require more than one ultrasound imaging study (for example, an Echocardiogram and an Abdominal ultrasound), it can require more than one appointment or trips to more than one department or location may be necessary. This requires more time away from work or time out of your patient's already busy day. Using the services of an on-site ultrasound provider—one that employs a multi-credentialed Sonographer—these same studies may be completed in one service visit and at one location. Patients appreciate this as it saves them **time** and **money**.



CASE STUDY

Internal Medicine Practice in the North Carolina Triad

This professional, multi-provider Internal Medicine practice had the service advantage of an imaging center next door. However, when a patient was referred out for diagnostic medical testing, he/she would not always follow through with the physician's orders. And even when the diagnostic testing was performed, the practice's medical staff had to spend additional time tracking down results and final reports. If a patient was referred to the hospital, the practice would often lose track of the diagnostic care that was provided.

After a careful review of the volume of ultrasound studies and these service issues, it made logical sense for this practice to provide on-site ultrasound service to eliminate these issues.

BENEFIT ③

Physician Staff Convenience

REMOVE THE SCHEDULING AND COMMUNICATION HASSLE OF IMAGING PROCEDURES



It is common for medical groups to encounter difficulty in referring and scheduling diagnostic procedures. In today's busy environment, medical staff should not be burdened with scheduling hassles, as they are already stretched in their patient care duties.

When ultrasound imaging is provided on-site, the schedule and availability of service are immediately known, so patient scheduling takes place in a simple and hassle-free way.

In addition, offering ultrasound imaging services on-site allows the practice and its physicians an additional way to build relationships with patients. Many practices are striving to re-establish strong patient bonds and relationships. The time saved with on-site imaging and the opportunity to spend more time with the patient while providing a value-added service forges a stronger bond between the practice and the patient.

CASE STUDY

Primary Care Medical Group in North Georgia

This primary care medical group enjoys the seamlessness and professionalism of on-site ultrasound imaging service. The practice has come to depend on the ease of diagnostic imaging, the reliability of service visits, and the beneficial relationship with the Sonographer who performs the technical service. The immediate feedback of preliminary ultrasound reports has been especially helpful to the practice and its patients when pathology necessitates a follow-up imaging study or other procedures, saving the practice and the patient time and money.



BENEFIT 4

Physician Control

DON'T LET YOUR PATIENTS GET LOST IN THE REFERRAL MAZE



High-quality medical practices strive to improve the health and lives of the patients that they serve with impactful care. Improving health outcomes is a primary focus. In order to have a beneficial impact, physicians must control how their patients are being treated and be accountable for the coordination and scheduling of diagnostic care. On-site ultrasound imaging helps to coordinate the continuum of care.

More and more, practices are frustrated that higher paying services are often handled by other providers, leaving primary care physicians to care for cold and cough cases. On-site ultrasound allows the primary care physician to provide a higher level of diagnostic care, instead of referring this care elsewhere.

CASE STUDY

Virginia-based Internal Medicine Practice

This medical practice wanted to ensure a higher level of care for its patients. In its experience, patients referred for diagnostic exams in some cases received more than what was necessary, something different than what was ordered, or less than what the primary care physician intended. Additionally, these patient referrals led to changes in patient care (for example, the prescription of different medications) that disrupted the care being provided by the primary care physician who more fully understood the patient's condition. This internal medicine group was also frustrated with the loss of patients and value-added services to other providers. These other providers were interested in capturing the revenue associated with higher reimbursing procedures and diagnostics, but when lower reimbursing and lower value care services were required, patients were eagerly referred back to the internal medicine practice for care.

Having diagnostic ultrasound service on-site allowed the practice to eliminate these issues, improving the level of care offered to patients and adding profit to the group.



BENEFIT 5

Patient Cost

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION TO INCREASING PATIENT COSTS DUE TO HIGHER DEDUCTIBLES AND COINSURANCE

Today more than ever, patients are responsible for an increasing share of healthcare costs. The increased prevalence of high deductible healthcare plans, health savings accounts, and co-insurance responsibilities puts more financial strain on patients. In this environment, patients are more aware and sensitive to how their healthcare dollars are spent.

Medical providers want to care for patients in the most cost-effective, efficient manner, and are interested in new ways to deliver high quality care as efficiently and inexpensively as possible. They want to deliver high-quality service without the higher costs associated with facility fees in the hospital and specialist care environments.

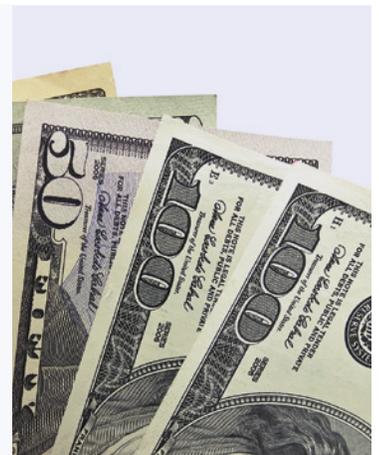


Ultrasound is an effective alternative to higher tech and higher cost imaging modalities such as CT, PET, MRI, or nuclear cardiac imaging. Of course, these imaging modalities are tremendously valuable, but they come with a cost that is **three times the cost** of ultrasound.² Some of these higher tech and higher cost imaging exams also come with the risk of radiation. On-site ultrasound is a cost-effective way to rule in or rule out pathology—which means it serves as an effective diagnostic *first line of defense*.

CASE STUDY

Tennessee-based Primary Care Group

This primary care group treats patients who have limited or no current medical insurance due to recent job loss, as a small subset of its overall patient population. Recently, a self-pay patient was suspected to have a possible torsion. The practice group was able to work with this patient to provide the ultrasound exam, receive the necessary compensation for the study, and save the patient over \$600 of out-of-pocket expense. The patient received the needed diagnostic care and saved valuable dollars—which meant the practice earned the loyalty of this patient for life.



² Based on a sample of five imaging modalities and 11 different study types and reimbursement, as provided by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Interested in Bringing These Benefits to Your Practice?

Consider These Key Ultrasound Service Questions

What to Consider and Look for in an On-Site Diagnostic Solution

- How do you evaluate the diagnostic quality an ultrasound provider offers?
- Does the ultrasound service vendor demonstrate the ability to offer clinical, operational, and billing support to your practice?
- Does on-site ultrasound service make good business sense for your practice?
- How much service do you need at your practice?

How Do You Evaluate the Diagnostic Quality an Ultrasound Provider Offers?

First and foremost, you want to ensure that service is provided by a high quality ultrasound technologist who has the recommended registries (as listed below) and who is also experienced in the type of ultrasounds you will provide patients in your practice.



ULTRASOUND EXAM TYPE	RECOMMENDED REGISTRIES
General Ultrasound Abdominal, Pelvic, Thyroid, Renal, Soft Tissue, Scrotal/ Testicular	ARDMS®, RDMS(AB)
Vascular Ultrasound Carotid, Aorta Duplex, Renal Artery Duplex, Lower Extremity Arterial Doppler, Upper Extremity Arterial Doppler, Venous Doppler, ABI	ARDMS®, RVT(VT)
Cardiac Ultrasound Echocardiogram	ARDMS®, RDMS(AE)

In addition to Sonographer registries and experience, you must be very comfortable with the ultrasound technologist to ensure a healthy working relationship. It is advisable to work with an ultrasound vendor accredited with the American College of Radiology (ACR®), the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Echocardiography Laboratories (ICAEL®) or both. These accreditations provide further assurances that the clinical ultrasound service will be provided in a high-quality manner accepted by the radiology and cardiology professions.



Does the Ultrasound Service Vendor Demonstrate the Ability to Offer *Clinical*, *Operational*, and *Billing* Support to Your Practice?

On top of the required credentials and accreditations, your ultrasound vendor should offer *clinical* oversight and management to ensure that service is provided to the satisfaction of your physicians. In addition, an active Quality Assurance program *needs* to be in place to guarantee clinical service levels and adherence to accreditation standards.

Operationally, your practice should insist on reliable support in terms of scheduling, final reports, delivery of clinical reports and images for referral care, and more. Ultrasound service must go far beyond the simple technical provision of the clinical service itself. You want to ensure that you are working with a professional provider who will support you and your patients. The last thing you want is a lack of report timeliness and/or unreliable service.

In order for the service to make good business sense for your practice, you must be able to bill and collect for ultrasound services. Fortunately, the *billing* of ultrasound is not overly complicated and is generally similar to conventional practice billing. However, there are some basic billing procedures that you should be aware of from the start in order to realize the full economic potential of the service. Your diagnostic provider should help you do this. Additionally, you will want to make sure that all ultrasound orders are valid and meet medical necessity requirements—by using appropriate study indication codes—to ensure timely reimbursement.

Your ultrasound service provider should be able to provide you with a fully compliant ultrasound services agreement that clearly outlines the duties of each party in the service arrangement. Generally these agreements are for one year; however, you should have proper protection for your practice to terminate the agreement with no more than 30-90 days notice if service does not meet the expectations of the practice for *whatever* reason.

Does On-Site Ultrasound Service Make Good Business Sense for My Practice?

How Much Service Do I Need at My Practice?

Generally speaking, if your practice refers out 6-8 ultrasound exams (in a balanced mix of general, vascular and cardiac studies) per week, a half-day (4 hours) of on-site diagnostic service per week will make good clinical and business sense.

Any ultrasound service vendor should be able to provide flexibility to adjust the amount of service (increase or decrease) as your practice needs change.



Conclusion

More and more focus is currently being devoted to the medical practice model of the *Patient Centered Medical Home* (PCMH). Enhancing service to patients is a key goal of the PCMH, a care model that emphasizes proactive and ongoing management of all of a patient's needs. The tracking and coordination of patient care is particularly important when scheduling procedures or imaging. On-site ultrasound imaging dovetails nicely with the PCMH model and its goals of providing a better overall patient experience.

We hope this white paper has provided you and your practice a good decision-making framework to assess the viability of on-site diagnostic services. Whether you choose to offer your patients services now or in the future, we hope you have found the information helpful.

If what you've learned here makes you want to learn more, please contact Videre. Our team will be happy to provide more information about what insightful on-site diagnostics could look like in your practice and help your practice succeed.

Contact Videre Today.

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