

HEALTHCARE

Testing a partnership under the pressures of a pandemic

How one team found purpose in new possibilities.

By [Karen Holzberger](#)

Senior Vice President and General Manager, Diagnostic Solutions
Nuance Communications, Inc.



Usually, April is as good a month as any to deploy a new solution. Radiology Alliance, a MEDNAX affiliate and Tennessee's second-largest radiology group practice, had long-planned to implement PowerScribe Follow-up Manager to improve follow-up compliance and clinical outcomes. But as fate would have it, their deployment schedule would collide with unprecedented disruptions caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Prioritizing progress

The Radiology Alliance team was among the more than [ninety percent of radiology practices](#) in the U.S. that experienced a major decline in the volume of procedures unrelated to COVID-19. "Instead of a standard deployment, we suddenly found ourselves upending everything we do—as well as how and where we do it—while simultaneously moving ahead with plans to roll out a new technology solution," said Kirk Hintz, Regional Vice President at MEDNAX Services, Inc. "To say it was unusual is quite an understatement."

Despite the seismic shift in their daily routines, the Radiology Alliance team opted to proceed with the deployment as planned. "We were invested in the process and didn't want to waste time. While our provider colleagues were exhausting themselves working on the front-lines of an extraordinary health-care crisis, we felt a duty to forge ahead and use any downtime the situation afforded our group as productively as possible," said Hintz.

Radiology Alliance already used [Nuance mPower Clinical Analytics](#) to gain and act on insights from key performance metrics. By adding [PowerScribe Follow-up Manager](#), the team was taking a very deliberate step toward eliminating failed follow-ups. Data from mPower feeds PowerScribe Follow-up



Karen Holzberger

Senior Vice President and General Manager,
Diagnostic Solutions
Nuance Communications, Inc.

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Manager, allowing the team to streamline the tracking process, communicate with referring clinicians and proactively improve follow-up compliance to ensure patients get the care they need.

“Our mission hinges on working closely with leading healthcare providers to diagnose and treat patients in a professional, accessible, and compassionate manner that focuses on the improvement of human life,” said Hintz. “What could be more important to improving a life than saving it?”

Getting it just right

Before PowerScribe Follow-up Manager, there was not an efficient way for Radiology Alliance to manage and identify the follow up recommendations. Automating the management and communication of follow-up recommendations provided us with the opportunity to implement an automated process which resulted in productivity and efficiency gains from the start. It also generated additional returns on the initial mPower investment by driving new revenue opportunities. The decision to implement mPower was based on a solid investment plan and ROI analysis,” said Hintz. “But the motivation behind it is about saving patients’ lives.”

Usually, deployments are all about helping users learn and get comfortable working with a new solution. But the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 meant the Radiology Alliance staff could invest themselves in the onboarding process and take time to explore and experiment. Knowing what was at stake, nurse navigators performed a manual review process to compare their results with those automatically generated in the solution’s reports. After weeks of parallel efforts, Radiology Alliance reported a near 100% capture rate in PowerScribe Follow-up Manager—consistent with their manual results but much more efficient. They have since added seven new searches and abandoned manual monitoring altogether in favor of letting the algorithm “work its magic.”

Investing in business, in care quality, and in lives

Radiology exams offer powerful diagnostic capabilities, helping providers understand a patient’s condition and serving as the foundation for care recommendations. These types of insights can have profound consequences and come with an inherent responsibility to ensure appropriate action is taken. Solutions like PowerScribe

Follow-up Manager offer an effective insurance policy to help patients get the care they deserve when it can help the most.

Since April 1, 296,224 patients have been through Radiology Alliance’s follow-up program with 2,288 new and validated incidental findings identified and communicated to either the ordering or primary care provider, or the patient directly. As a result, 362 patients returned to seek services.

Closing the follow-up loop certainly has improved efficiency and identified new revenue opportunities. But to the radiologists whose incidental findings of a suspicious mass during a routine CT scan, PowerScribe Follow-up Manager lessens the concern that a potentially lifesaving follow-up exam could be missed or forgotten. Consider that [the 5-year survival rate](#) for ovarian cancer is over ninety percent if diagnosed and treated in stage 1. However, only about 15 percent are diagnosed in stage 1, and survival rates quickly decline as the cancer grows. Follow-up for an incidental finding of early-stage cancer could make all the difference for that patient.

“The possibilities are endless. It’s exactly how radiology should get done—I literally sleep better at night knowing what’s in place and what it means for our ability to provide quality care,” said Hintz. “Recently, [PowerScribe] Follow-up Manager automatically issued communications to about 180 of our patients regarding incidental findings. Our staff uses the solution to track the alert until appropriate action is taken. In some cases, we had patients without a physician of record call us back directly to ask what they should do next.”

Whether incidental findings are related to renal, spleen, thyroid, kidney or other organs, Radiology Alliance now relies on mPower and PowerScribe Follow-up Manager to ensure no patient slips through the cracks of the healthcare system. “It helps renew our team’s sense of purpose and validates the value of their work,” said Hintz. “As healthcare systems at large resume preventative and elective procedures, we fully expect to see patient volumes return. And when they do, we’ll be better equipped than ever to offer help—and hope.”

LEARN MORE

To learn more about PowerScribe Follow-up Manager, click [here](#).

About Karen Holzberger

The Real View is a blog series with [Karen Holzberger](#), Vice President and General Manager of Nuance Healthcare's Diagnostic Division. The Real View cuts through the hype and gets to what's real, here, and now. The blog series features interviews and insights from health IT movers and shakers—and uncovers disruptive technologies that solve challenges, optimize workflow, and increase efficiencies to improve patient care.

[Karen Holzberger](#) is the senior vice president and general manager of Nuance's Healthcare's diagnostic solutions business. Karen joined Nuance in 2014 with more than 15 years of experience in the Healthcare industry. Prior to Nuance, she was the vice president and general manager of Global Radiology Workflow at GE Healthcare where she managed service, implementation, product management and development for mission critical healthcare IT software. Karen attended Stevens Institute of Technology where she earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering.

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