



ALB FILS KLINIKEN,
Germany

Long-term partnership for **ultrasound** **system management**



Executive Summary

In 2014, the Alb Fils Kliniken dual-site hospital in Germany chose Siemens Healthineers as a long-term partner to improve the management of its ultrasound systems across medical departments and to ensure technological innovation for years to come. Siemens Healthineers offered a combined approach of consulting and Asset Management Services (AMS) to improve the hospitals' system usage, service processes, and investment planning. The eight-year contract included providing the hospitals with the latest ultrasound technology at an affordable cost.

After four years, Alb Fils Kliniken had the opportunity to report an intermediate result:

- The partnership saves significant administrative costs on all levels (clinic management, medical departments, and medical technology department).
- The improved investment planning provides peace of mind for all involved. The transparent schedule of system replacement eliminates time-consuming conflicts between departments about where to invest.
- The technological innovation enabled by the partnership allowed the introduction of new diagnostic methods.

"A strategic partnership over a long period of time, a clearly structured procurement plan, maintenance management from a single source, systematic innovation for many years – these are the cornerstones of the project."

Ralf Bannwarth

Head of Procurement, Medical Technology, and Material Management, Alb Fils Kliniken



Get more from ultrasound systems Alb Fils Kliniken, Germany

In highly competitive surroundings, healthcare providers need to streamline their processes and maximize the impact of their investments. But when it comes to ultrasound systems, things get complex. Virtually every department uses ultrasound, which means a large fleet of systems spread through the entire institution. With numerous manufacturers on the market, and clinical requirements for ultrasound systems varying widely from department to department, the system fleet can end up being very heterogeneous. This makes efficient procurement, service, training, and user support a challenge.

In 2014 the Alb Fils Kliniken, located in the towns of Göppingen and Geislingen, Germany, decided to address this situation, and they recognized the great potential that lies in efficient ultrasound system management. That's why they looked for a long-term partnership that would help them reduce the number of suppliers, relieve their technical department's service and user support workload, and ensure technological innovation for years to come. They found this partnership in Siemens Healthineers' AMS programs.

About Alb Fils Kliniken:

- Maximum-care hospital with two facilities (in Göppingen and Geislingen)
- Broad spectrum of healthcare services for a large region in southwestern Germany
- Provides health services for about 140,000 inpatients and 35,000 outpatients per year
- 25 individual clinical departments and more than 15 specialty centers
- 775 planned beds
- More than 2,300 employees



“In the field of ultrasound, the challenge is to find the common denominator for everyone involved. After all, nearly all the disciplines here at our clinic use ultrasound systems, not just radiology. That’s why it was a big step to focus on one industry partner so that each department and each location no longer have separate suppliers.”

Ralf Bannwarth
Head of Procurement, Medical Technology, and Material Management, Alb Fils Kliniken

“In the past 15 years, the number of medical devices at our clinic has more than doubled. With the increasing number and complexity of the systems, strategic partnerships are almost an absolute necessity to keep a facility of our size running efficiently. Thanks to our positive experience with Siemens Healthineers, we have extended the basic idea of a strategic partnership to other projects.”

Günter Exner
Acting Director of the Medical Technology Department, Alb Fils Kliniken



The challenges

Compared with other imaging modalities, ultrasound systems probably provide the greatest challenge to system management, for a number of reasons:

- Ultrasound is the most widely-used imaging modality. It’s present in almost every medical department. Multiple users spread all over the institution sometimes need to be involved in the overarching system management.
- Ultrasound is used for a variety of clinical purposes, some of them very specific to the individual department. Therefore, the clinical requirements for ultrasound systems can differ drastically from case to case.
- There is no central “ultrasound department” comparable to the radiology department for imaging modalities like CT or MRI that could play a leading role within the clinic.
- Many manufacturers produce ultrasound systems, which can make service and service management difficult.
- The exact utilization of an ultrasound system is often not transparent to the clinic management or technical department. Because ultrasound systems are usually mobile or even portable, their location is sometimes difficult to trace.
- Excellent investment planning is needed to keep a large fleet of ultrasound systems technologically up to date and to meet the growing demands of patients, referrers, and clinical users.

To meet these challenges and expand an existing radiology partnership with Alb Fils Kliniken, Siemens Healthineers developed an innovative ultrasound management concept that was objectively tested and positively evaluated by the end-users in Göppingen and Geislingen.

The solution

Siemens Healthineers offered an Asset Management Services (AMS) solution that laid the foundation for a long-term partnership in which Siemens Healthineers manages the ultrasound equipment throughout its lifecycle. This includes technology selection, purchase, installation and commissioning, user training, performance management, maintenance, and ongoing replacement. Other key elements of the partnership are:

- Involvement of and collaboration with all end users from the beginning of the project by means of interviews, questionnaires, and test-runs with systems in order to jointly determine the most appropriate operational concept
- Inclusion of third-party systems in the service and investment planning

- Advice on process improvement and efficient system operation
- Creation of synergies through system sharing, and a reduction of the overall number of systems by abolishing redundancies
- Central Site Manager from Siemens Healthineers to coordinate service and continually improve processes
- Long-term investment planning that’s fully transparent to all stakeholders
- A flexible contract structure that allows for adjustments due to changing circumstances

Overview of services covered by the contract:

- A comprehensive analysis of the existing ultrasound fleet and usage
- Realization of savings potentials through system sharing
- Procurement, training, and service for the entire ultrasound fleet
- Standardization of systems to enable efficient operation and facilitate equipment management and procurement
- A vendor-neutral, cost-optimized purchasing concept
- A technology roadmap for the replacement of equipment for the next eight years
- Improved cash position by rolling up capital expenses into the regular operational fees



“The decisive factor for us was that the partnership contract with Siemens Healthineers also included systems from other manufacturers, because there are simply no Siemens systems for endosonography. It was great that we were able to procure a special solution for our department. What’s more, we were able to purchase an additional high-end system for our liver center via the partnership. With that system we can now hold regular ARFI office hours. Prior to this we did not have any options for elastography. Now we are able to spare many patients a liver biopsy.”*

Dr. Klaus Metter

Chief Physician at Clinic for Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Diabetology, Alb Fils Kliniken Göppingen



“Economic aspects naturally played a key role, but the users were also heavily involved in the decision-making process. In this regard, we are also very thankful to Siemens Healthineers for the openness they showed in working on this project. I can highly recommend this approach to anyone who works extensively in hospitals, such as in a hospital group.”

Prof. Dr. Andreas Schuler

Medical Director of Alb Fils Kliniken,
Executive Chief Physician of Gastroenterology at Alb Fils Kliniken,
Chief Physician of the Medical Clinic at Alb Fils Kliniken Geislingen

The results

The long-term AMS partnership has proven highly beneficial for Alb Fils Kliniken in a number of ways:

- Savings potentials through system sharing have enabled a reduction in the number of ultrasound systems by 17 percent, from 42 to 35.
- The systems are now consistently kept technologically up to date.
- New high-end systems allow the use of new diagnostic methods like acoustic radiation force impulse (ARFI) imaging.
- The number of system suppliers could be reduced significantly.
- Transparent investment planning eliminates interdepartmental competition for investments. The savings in negotiation time on C-level amount to 150 man hours each year.
- The flexible partnership allows for contract adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances.
- The Siemens Healthineers Site Manager efficiently supports system servicing and relieves the clinic’s technical department.



Source: <https://www.healthcare.siemens.com/ultrasound/advanced-applications/ultrasound-elastography-systems>

* Acoustic Radiation Force Impulse (ARFI) imaging enables a non-invasive assessment of the mechanical stiffness (elasticity) of liver tissue. This ultrasound-based imaging technique can be used to avoid liver biopsies and diagnose fibrosis reliably.

Call to action

The need to optimize financial resources and at the same time provide sustainable, modern technological infrastructure is driving a major transformation in the way healthcare systems depend on technology suppliers. To benefit from this transformation, healthcare institutions need innovative approaches that include adoption of new business models. One successful approach is a long-term strategic partnership with a medical industry player in which both parties work together to drive efficiency, innovation and outcome oriented medical service delivery. Such close collaborations are already highly successful in radiology departments and laboratory management.

The partnership between Alb Fils Kliniken and Siemens Healthineers shows that this approach can also be applied to ultrasound systems. The AMS solution enables Alb Fils Kliniken to sustainably enhance their system management so that they can provide high-quality care over the long term.

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