

# Path to Progress: Migrating from *syngo* MultiModality Workplace to *syngo.via*

It is all about horsepower when it comes to multimodality image viewing to facilitate confident, effective, robust and swift physician decision-making. The powerful imaging software used today to measure and manipulate medical images is as essential to the clinical decision-making process as the modality that acquires the images.

By Kathy F. Mahdoubi

The newest generation of sophisticated and intuitive imaging software is Siemens *syngo*®.via, a vast suite of software that spans all of radiology, not just molecular imaging, but also CT and MRI and a host of other modalities. The technology's advancements open the door to anywhere\*, anytime access to integrated PET•CT reading with remarkable ease of use. Improved workflow automation and intelligent features serve to streamline the reading process. Early adopter of *syngo.via*, Steven W. Falen, MD, PhD, is medical director at Northern California PET Imaging Center based in Sacramento, CA, USA. The free-standing molecular imaging facility was the first non-university center of its kind in the country and focuses primarily on oncology imaging, but also provides neuro-imaging for dementias and epilepsy, in addition to cardiac stress testing. Falen was a super-user of the *syngo* MultiModality Workplace (MMWP). So after upgrading to Siemens Biograph™ mCT system last year, the move to *syngo.via* just seemed natural. Falen has become increasingly familiar with the new imaging software and offers some insight and advice for other imaging professionals looking to make the transition.



Steven W. Falen, MD, PhD, the medical director at Northern California PET Imaging Center based in Sacramento, CA, USA, was a super-user of the *syngo* MultiModality Workplace (left 2 screens) until the facility upgraded to a Siemens Biograph mCT PET•CT system last year when the move to *syngo.via* (right 2 screens) was right. By eliminating manual steps, *syngo.via*'s new automated tools can cut physician read times by as much as 45 percent.

## Automating & Optimizing

One of the most important aspects of Siemens *syngo.via* is its focus on automation and ease of use. Much of the design of the new worklist and reading environment aims to eliminate unnecessary work and stress on the physician by reducing

mouse clicks and eye movements. In fact, *syngo.via*'s new automated tools can cut physician time by as much as 45 percent by eliminating manual steps. "It used to be that you had to move around a lot with the mouse and cursor

to access things,” says Falen. “Most people read with dual-display monitors. If you are on one display monitor and you want something, you have to go all the way over to the edge of the other monitor and grab the distance tool and go all the way back again and draw your measure. If you want to erase it, you have to go way over to the other side again. Whereas, with *syngo.via* everything is right within the segment and you just move your cursor up to the corner of the segment you’re in and all those tools drop down in front of you. It definitely makes things faster and easier.”

### Smart Features

Another way that *syngo.via* has improved workflow is by prompting automatic searches for prior studies instead of requiring physicians to manually search for each previous scan. This is a big time-saver in oncology cases, for example, as it’s estimated that as many as 60 percent of cancer patients have prior studies that need to be consulted in order to make appropriate clinical decisions. The new system creates patient-centric worklists, for which it uses intelligent auto-population and pre-fetching features. When selecting a patient from the worklist, *syngo.via* then opens the case in the appropriate viewing environment using a diverse range of imaging engines optimized for oncology, neurology, cardiac or other areas, enabling physicians to start working immediately. It is simple. My cases—ready. My images—networked. My needs—anticipated. And the reading tools become smarter, too. Take an oncology case, for example: one stroke of the mouse starts both the PET and CT segmentation and provides quantification including WHO, RECIST,  $SUV_{max}$  and  $SUV_{peak}$ . As an added benefit, continuous updates are available from Siemens to enhance the software and provide added security.

### Think Thin (Client)

The greatest benefit for Falen has been the transition away from the “thick client” MMWP workstation that was limited to local access to the thin-client technol-

ogy of *syngo.via*, which allows clinicians to access a server from any terminal on the network.

“The reason I was so interested in *syngo.via* is the capability of doing remote reading,” says Falen. “I think one of the things that has always been a problem is that the software is fairly extensive and you need a workstation to be able to analyze fused PET•CT images. A stand-alone thick-client workstation is expensive and if you work in several places or you have several physicians who need to have access, it can be a really large cost.” Anywhere\* that provides sufficient network speed can accommodate *syngo.via*. Falen has a similar set-up at his home as he does at his office, and

For tumor boards or when Falen is traveling or at a meeting, he can use a laptop to give an opinion on a case. “*Syngo.via* can be used at off-site tumor boards if the hospital can provide a sufficient network guest line,” says Falen.

### Easing the Learning Curve

Falen says his transition from MMWP to *syngo.via* has been smooth and in stages. As exceptional as *syngo.via*’s design and functionality may be, he says all new users will still need to adjust when upgrading from one system to another. “There is always a learning curve and a little bit of resistance when you go to the next package,” says Falen. “You learn one and over time you get to be an

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retains yet another system at his vacation property. He utilizes a fiber-optic network and service that provides transmission speeds of about 20 to 25 megabits per second.

“It used to be that I was really tied to my office,” says Falen. “In my case, there is a lot of work and I can easily put in a 12-hour day. I can spend the whole weekend here if I want. Now knowing that I don’t have to live here helps a lot. Otherwise, you can spend a lot of time at work and get very tired, and I don’t think that does the patient any good.” One of Falen’s primary responsibilities is weighing in on tumor boards at several different hospitals and providing clinical opinions to other specialists. In fact, he participates in a tumor board almost every day. For diagnostic interpretation, Falen prefers to use a PC or laptop that supports dual diagnostic-grade monitors.

expert on it. Then another software package comes along that offers more features and probably is better, but at first there is some reluctance to change.” Once physicians have familiarized themselves with the new software, Falen says they will get hooked on *syngo.via*’s automation. And in case it’s needed, online and live application support is available. “After a while, you start becoming comfortable with the new tools and appreciate the fact that you don’t have as many steps to do. One day you find yourself trying to use the old software, the extra steps become bothersome and you no longer want to go back.”

\* Prerequisites include: Internet connection to clinical network, DICOM compliance, meeting of minimum hardware requirements, and adherence to local data security regulations.

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