

CONCEPT

See-Through Green

A Walsh Imaging, Inc.'s digital technology lowers the carbon footprint of X-ray.

The world has gone digital—and film is a thing of the past.

Darkrooms might as well be lumped in with the Dark Ages as far as modern-day imagery is concerned: Television, cinema, even intimate snapshots on our own personal digi-cams—it's all about computerized, crisp, electronic representations of what goes on around us ... and inside us as well.

The Pompton Lakes-based A Walsh Imaging, Inc. has been providing X-ray equipment and film processors for nearly 40 years—but as the priorities of society shift, the company has been putting less emphasis on the latter and has instead focused on touting its offering of digital imaging gear.

Digital imaging is ideal for X-ray on a number of fronts, according to the company's co-vice presidents, Thomas D. Walsh and Anthony Iurato, and president Patrick Walsh. Digital equipment makes for a more productive workflow, saves money on energy and materials, and is significantly less harsh on the environment.

"You have to change with the times," says Iurato, "and a lot of big facilities are looking to go green."

Digital Solutions and PACS technologies offered by A Walsh Imaging replace the conventional method of utilizing film and chemicals and instead creates a computerized image. According to the company's website, the light-sensitive properties of silver composites allow the X-ray process to occur, which thereby creates highly toxic excess, classified as "special wastes" by the Environmental Protection Agency. Additionally, used film developer and fixer, with an offensive odor and even more offensive effect on one's lungs, "are deemed corrosive hazardous waste by the EPA," the company says. Digital X-ray eliminates the need for any film, or development, whatsoever.

Digital imaging, in addition to being greener and cleaner, eliminates the necessity for what Iurato refers to as consumables—film, chemical solutions for developing, etc.—which poses a great potential for companies to save loads of cash and time and also cuts down on shipping costs.

"After [business'] initial investment is satisfied, they're saving on the consumables but they're also saving on employee time because their workflow is changing," Iurato says.

The conventional method of X-ray imaging was time-consuming and draining on employees, Iurato says, involving many steps, processes, and chemicals to achieve the final picture. Traditionally, employees would bring the film into a darkroom; wait for the film to develop; then take the hard copy and display it on a light box for patients. "Now, within a few seconds, [the X-ray image] is already on a main server, and a



few seconds after that it's ready to be viewed by the doctor in an exam room," says Iurato. "So the turnaround time for images is under three minutes, whereas just the processing time alone, the loading and unloading of the media, would take at least two to three minutes, not including walk-around time or anything like that." Computer accessibility to images also allows doctors to easily obtain second opinions from fellow physicians by sending them through email—getting a second pair of eyes on an X-ray traditionally could take days or weeks.

With the money saved on consumables, combined with the fact that digital imaging equipment uses only a fraction of the power consumed by conventional X-ray, the company says small-to-medium-sized practices save between \$200 and \$1,000 per month after going digital, with large practices saving four times as much. This means practices can expect a return on investment in just a few short years. Financing assistance is available to those spooked by upfront costs.

The storage issue is another aspect of X-rays which is alleviated with digital imaging, especially for practices lacking surface area in urban settings.

"Places like Manhattan that have no space, it helps...because [practices] have a tremendous amount of film that they have to store," says Thomas Walsh. "Some places fill up and they have to use storage sites to save all these films for 10 years..."

"...Or even extra rooms," interjects Patrick Walsh. "You don't need a darkroom, so that's a room you can use for something else. No film storage room, either."

Of course, radiation—the meat and potatoes of the X-ray process—is one harsh element that there's no getting around for the time being. But digital imaging is quite a progressive step for X-ray, and A Walsh Imaging, Inc. hopes that medical practices that are hesitant to update their X-ray technology, or who may not be able to afford more upgraded equipment, eventually come around—if not for their budgets, then for the planet.

— Lindsay Suchow

Newton Veterinary Hospital technicians Greg Hinks and Kaitlyn Sacks prepare Chowder the yellow labrador for a green X-ray. The Sussex County 24-hour facility's X-ray suite, outfitted by A Walsh Imaging, Inc., is comprised of a Quantum Q-Vet DRR digital solution with a mini-pacs and an AFP Eva-Vet Dental DR.

Dealer Information

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