

# Diverse Practices Turn to PETLinQ™ IQ to Optimize PET/CT Operations

*"...[PETLinQ] has increased the confidence of our reading physicians, therefore we are much more confident in our interpretations."*

**Larry Braunstein**

*Interventional Radiologist  
Vision Imaging of Kingston  
Kingston, PA*

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## The last several years have seen tremendous changes in the PET/CT market.

On one hand, the Deficit Reduction Act prompted reimbursement cuts of up to 50 percent. On the positive side, the National Oncologic PET Registry (NOPR) resulted in additions to the list of approved indications and CMS is thus covering more cancer scans for Medicare patients than ever before. Plus, PET/CT utilization continues to increase; in 2008, 1.52 million studies were performed in the U.S., an annual growth rate of 10.4 percent since 2005.

Still, launching and maintaining an efficient and profitable PET/CT program represents a hefty challenge. Clinical knowledge of PET/CT imaging is uneven. On the referring physician side, a wide array of diverse users from breast surgeons to medical oncologists serve patients who stand to benefit from PET/CT; however, not all clinicians fully understand appropriate indications for the study. In addition, some locations face shortages of radiologists with appropriate training, technologists qualified to handle studies or both. In some markets, competition among PET/CT providers is fierce. Differentiation is critical to success; smart PET/CT providers deliver excellent service including clinical education and quality reporting. For many imaging providers, PET /CT requires a new business model.

The PETLinQ IQ solution provides a robust solution that helps practices effectively meet the various clinical, marketing and operational challenges of PET/CT imaging. Designed to help facilities increase efficiency, boost quality and implement standardized care, the PETLinQ

IQ program provides a range of services, including peer review, clinical education and workflow analysis. It has been successfully implemented at scores of facilities across the country. The results are impressive. New sites have tapped into PETLinQ IQ to build capacity, educate physicians and ensure quality. Established PET/CT providers use the program with similar objectives.

*There is one constant among these PETLinQ IQ users: increased referrals.*

## THE NATIONAL ENDEAVOR

Presgar Facilities is a national radiology benefits management company with headquarters in Tampa, Fla., and Babylon, N.Y. It provides marketing development, management, administrative and billing support for nearly 40 freestanding imaging centers across the country.

IBA introduced Presgar Facilities to the PETLinQ IQ program late in 2008, and the company decided to integrate it into its marketing program to help practices differentiate from the competition and increase their PET/CT volume.



**Tracee Melby**  
Vice President of Marketing  
Presgar Facilities

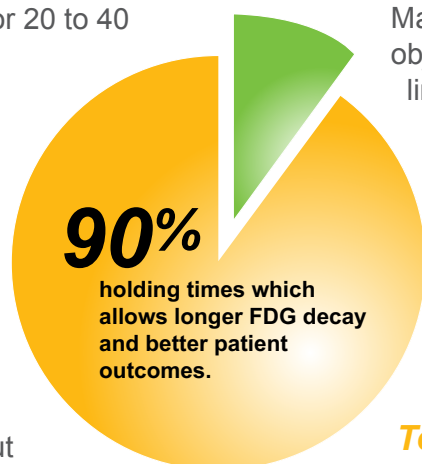
Currently, Presgar offices are rolling out the PETLinQ IQ program at practices across the country. “All of our practices that are participating with the PETLinQ IQ program are using some level of Peer Review for their PET interpretations,” shares Tracee Melby, Vice

President of Marketing. Peer Review provides a second set of eyes on each PET interpretation. Robert Bridwell, MD, Chief Medical Officer for PETLinQ and former director of nuclear medicine at Walter Reed Medical Center (Washington, D.C.), provides Peer Review. At Presgar Facilities, some practices participate fully with 100 percent Peer Review, and others use it on a more limited basis, reserving clinical overview for specific cases such as neuro PET/CT studies.

Melby admits that some radiologists initially voiced resistance to Peer Review. “After meeting Bridwell and hearing his message about clinical standardization of medicine and discussing cases with him, they began to value his interpretations,” she shares.

Melby approached the PETLinQ IQ implementation judiciously and set the stage for tight integration between PETLinQ IQ and the clinical practice. That meant bringing Bridwell to each site for an introductory educational seminar. During the typical large group lecture, Bridwell provides an overview of the scope of PETLinQ IQ for 20 to 40 physicians.

PETLinQ IQ assists clinical marketing by providing a clear way for practices to delineate quality and differentiate their services, but the program goes beyond marketing. It provides critical information about the entire PET/CT workflow and helps practices analyze factors such as holding times, ordering and scan protocols to optimize their operations.



For examples, after implementing PETLinQ IQ, all Presgar Facilities practices increased holding times, which allows longer FDG decay and better patient outcomes.

After the initial seminar with Bridwell, Presgar Facilities began scheduling bi-monthly or quarterly small group dinners designed to widen the circle of informed clinicians. “The small gatherings are quite effective,” says Melby. “It’s a good way to start the long-term dialogue [about affecting change in the PET/CT practice.]” Small group sessions may begin with just a single physician; however, the group grows each time as Bridwell asks attendees to bring a colleague to future sessions. After just a few sessions, one of Presgar Facilities’ small group sessions has swelled to 15 to 20 physicians.

Growth and continuity are critical to success. “The longer and the larger the program grows, the better the results,” shares Melby. In some practices, Melby has seen a 15 percent increase in volume over the previous year.

Market growth, however, is not the sole objective of the program; growth should be linked to improvement in clinical quality, says Melby. One of the primary tasks in any clinical marketing program is helping physicians manage and improve patient care.

***The overarching question is: how did the program help the physician help the patient? Tools that deliver timelier or more consistent reporting, improved scan acquisition or clear and consistent patient follow-up all qualify as clinical marketing winners.***

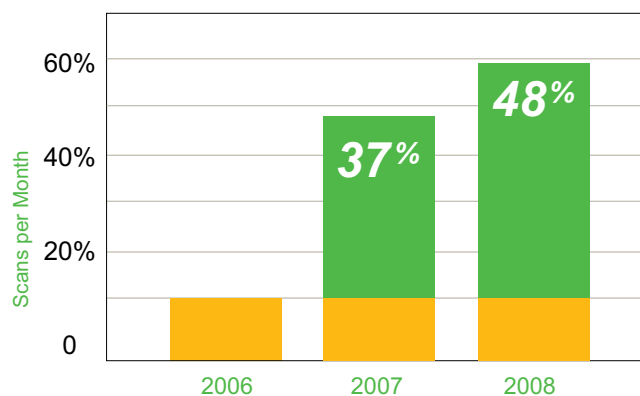
PETLinQ IQ delivers each outcome. For example, at Presgar Facilities, Bridwell works with radiation oncologists and nuclear medicine technologists to achieve better patient positioning, which, in turn, improves image acquisition.

## CLINICAL MARKETING OPTIMIZED



Forest City Diagnostic Imaging Staff  
Rockford, Illinois

Forest City Diagnostic Imaging in Rockford, Ill., an independent full-service diagnostic imaging center, turned to PETLinQ IQ four years ago when IBA debuted the program. “PETLinQ is very pertinent to our practice. It enhances all aspects of operations,” says Lisa Gille, Director of Marketing. In fact, Gille attributes the practice’s strong, steady PET/CT growth to PETLinQ IQ. Volume increased 37 percent from 2006 to 2007—and then 48 percent the next year. (see graph below)



Over the last four years, Gille has encountered multiple PET/CT marketing challenges from basic education to under-utilization to intense local competition with two other local PET/CT providers. PETLinQ IQ assists on all fronts. It streamlines Gille’s research process, allowing her to tailor the marketing approach to the individual needs of referring physicians. That is, prior to every clinician meeting, Gille logs onto the PETLinQ IQ website to gather data. “Depending on the physician, I’ll access and print articles about the use of PET/CT in radiation treatment planning or for specific cancers,” explains Gille. Other times, PETLinQ IQ directs her to data to share with PET/CT non-believers. In every case, she highlights the main points to ensure efficient use of physicians’ time. Similarly, if a referring physician calls with a question about use of PET/CT in a specific case, Gille logs onto PETLinQ IQ web to quickly locate pertinent research. Within minutes, she emails the physician with relevant data, which helps ensure appropriate utilization.

Another major benefit of PETLinQ IQ is its emphasis on standardization of care. Forest City Diagnostic Imaging leveraged PETLinQ IQ to develop flow charts and algorithms to share with radiologists and referring physicians and inform standardized care. “It helps keep everyone on the same track as far as indications and orders,” explains Gille.

Forest City Diagnostic Imaging taps into other PETLinQ resources as well. All studies are shared with Bridwell via the Peer Review program. “Referring physicians appreciate that we offer Peer Review on all reports,” confirms Gille. Peer Review is not a second opinion, but does provide expert input into the study and report.

Radiologists also worked with Bridwell to identify

the components of a quality PET/CT report and used the findings to design PET/CT report templates. The practice provides referrers with the information they need, which boosts workflow and satisfaction on all sides. The final educational piece is Bridwell's blogs. Gille and other users submit questions to Bridwell; answers are posted on the PETLinQ website, so all users benefit from the information.

## THE PET/CT START-UP

Community Cancer Center in Normal, Ill., was established 10 years ago as a joint venture between two local hospitals. The goal was simple. The founders wanted to provide comprehensive cancer treatment in a single building. Today, Community Cancer Center combines multiple physician specialties, drug therapies, radiation treatment, oncology research and a full complement of support services. Late in 2007, Community Cancer Center also deployed a state of the art PET/CT scanner.

Like any new investment, the new PET/CT system created challenges. Imaging Coordinator Rae Anne Robertson explains, "Community Cancer Center has only one radiologist board certified in nuclear medicine, but he isn't the only physician who reads PET/CT studies." The center needed a way to build skills among all readers to ensure quality and help grow the new service.

Radiopharmaceutical provider IBA introduced Community Cancer Center to PETLinQ IQ, and the center started using the program when it first offered PET/CT imaging in 2007. PETLinQ IQ provides a critical helping hand for the center. Specifically, Dr. Bridwell serves as a virtual partner who over-reads all PET/CT studies

acquired at Community Cancer Center. In addition, radiologists use Bridwell as a resource to respond to questions and concerns about specific cases. For example, we were advised to prepare the patient with Thyrogen for two days prior to their 18FDG PET/CT scan to increase sensitivity for thyroid cancer metastases. PETLinQ supplements Bridwell's considerable live expertise by making available hundreds of PET/CT case studies, Power Point indications and real-time movies in the PETLinQ IQ educational portal. "With PETLinQ IQ, our radiologists and referring physicians are confident in PET/CT results and reports," shares Robertson.

The center also uses PETLinQ IQ to educate physicians and standardize protocols. Shortly after Community Cancer Center deployed its PET/CT system, Bridwell hosted an educational seminar with the local breast tumor board, a multi-disciplinary group comprised of pathologists, surgeons, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists and nurses. Early into the PET/CT program, the disparate group of clinicians had a variety of ideas about how to use the hybrid imaging system. Gathering everyone in one room with an expert to facilitate the discussion about how PET/CT helped the tumor board reach consensus, says Robertson. In addition, she continues, PETLinQ IQ arms physicians with the information needed to obtain optimal scans.

Consensus among clinical providers is critical from the patient care, efficiency and reimbursement perspectives. On the patient care side, PET/CT applications and protocols are standardized among all breast cancer patients at Community Cancer Center, which facilitates efficiency. In addition, if insurance challenges arise, the center's chances of successfully negotiating coverage are improved when all

providers present a united front about PET/CT indications.

After the successful educational seminar with the breast tumor board, Community Cancer Center turned to Bridwell and PETLinQ for similar programs with its radiologists, medical oncologists and radiation oncologists. The commitment to standardization and high quality reporting has paid off at Community Cancer Center; PET/CT volume continues to climb.

Although the educational seminars, over-reads and physician portal are the primary PETLinQ offerings Community Cancer Center uses, the practice does take advantage of other features. For example, the center provides area physicians with temporary passwords that allow them to access images and reports online for biopsies performed at the hospital. Consequently, the practice no longer spends the time or money creating biopsy CDs for these physicians.

***“We were excited about PETLinQ IQ when we started using it on day one, and we are just as excited as we contemplate the future prospects with the program,” says Robertson. “We intend to use PETLinQ IQ to educate our referring physicians in using PET at the appropriate time. This will help our physicians answer their clinical questions regarding diagnosis, staging, restaging, monitoring of therapy and radiation therapy treatment planning.”***

## CLINICAL OPERATIONS REDEFINED

PET/CT providers must contend with a complex array of business and operational challenges. PETLinQ IQ provides a veritable warehouse of PET/CT expertise including clinical education, standardized care and report template design assistance to help practices optimize their operations. PETLinQ IQ sites demonstrate the promise of the program; all have improved operations, bettered quality and increased referrals. PETLinQ IQ provides the roadmap to the ideal PET/CT business model.

## PETLinQ IQ: THE PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE



Clinical marketing experts understand how PETLinQ IQ benefits the practice, but radiologists can be resistant. The solution, however, addresses many complex PET/CT imaging challenges, says David Rosenthal, MD, partner at Highway Imaging in New York City. “PETLinQ IQ boosts diagnostic confidence,” he says.



## PETLinQ IQ Education and Marketing Toolbox

Rosenthal and his colleagues specialize in oncologic studies, but some cases present a diagnostic challenge. For example, referring physicians sent two neurosarcoïd cases to Highway Imaging for PET/CT imaging. Such cases are complex with difficult to recognize changes. In both cases, the practice shared the study and report with Dr. Bridwell, MD for Peer Review and used his feedback to boost diagnostic confidence.

**Another PETLinQ advantage is the robust, physician-friendly website. "It keeps us up to date in the rapidly changing PET/CT imaging world," shares Rosenthal.**

The website is a treasure trove of information that assists practices with everything from better coordination of clinical care to technical issues about FDG to identification of attenuation artifacts. Ultimately, the solution helps practices deliver optimal service to patients and referring physicians, says Rosenthal. ■

## IBA Molecular North America, LLC

IBA Molecular is the #1 PET radiopharmaceutical provider worldwide. We are driven by the vision that Molecular Imaging has reached only a fraction of its full potential. As we collaborate with leaders throughout the world to develop the diagnostic imaging agents of tomorrow, we are committed to offering products and solutions aimed to help PET Centers achieve success and impact patients' lives today.

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## PETLinQ LLC

PETLinQ LLC is a market leading, highly innovative technology company within the radiology space for the multi-modality outpatient and PET center space. It's #1 priority is to develop products that deliver uniform quality of care to the patient irrespective of the place of care. Its suite of products and services include image and report distribution/archiving, real time clinical peer review, radiology fusion workstations, Windows and Mac based RIS/Billing/Collections and a patent pending HL7 interface engine. Visit us at [www.petlinq.com](http://www.petlinq.com)

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