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Park Ridge's X-rays going digital

Hospital will work with Eastman Kodak.

Ben Rand
Staff writer

Patients and doctors at Park Ridge Hospital will spend less time waiting for the right X-ray and more time practicing health care under a significant technological transformation taking place over the next six months.

Park Ridge is contracting with Eastman Kodak Co. to obtain the next generation in digital imaging and information management technologies, the companies will announce this morning. The goal: to make it easier for physicians to find, view and interpret exactly the X-ray image they need, whenever they want and wherever they are.

The installation marks the beginning of the end of Park Ridge's film-based radiology department, which takes about 100,000 X-rays a year — or about one every five minutes.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed. But upon completion, it will mean that each of greater Rochester's major hospitals has fully embraced the age of digital imaging, with Kodak's help.

Rochester General and Strong Memorial hospitals are working with the region's second-largest employer to make the shift to digital X-rays, with great success: Kodak says that technicians at RGH are capturing 20 percent more X-rays since installing the technology.

Under the agreement, Park Ridge, operated by Unity Health System, will purchase Kodak technology for creating a systemwide radiology network. The company's hardware and software will manage the review, storage and distribution of digital X-rays and related administrative documents.

Kodak consultants also will help Park Ridge redesign work processes to capitalize on the new technology, said John Glynn, Unity's chief information officer.

That was a key reason why Park Ridge chose Kodak from among seven vendors after a nationwide search, he said. Kodak "is going to be looking at how work is done today and show us how it should be done to get the most out of the process," he said.

The contract with Park Ridge may advance the region's goal of creating a regionwide data-sharing network, Glynn said.

Each of the three hospitals is using Kodak technology, which is built to communicate easily with health care IT systems from other companies. That could make it easier should the hospitals seek to link up through the Rochester Health Information Organization, which ultimately is aimed at replacing paper with electronic medical records.

The contract comes as Kodak's health group, with about \$2.7 billion in revenue last year, faces some

uncertainties. Kodak in May said it had retained Goldman, Sachs & Co. to consider a sale, joint venture, partnership or other strategic alternatives for the health unit. Executives said the health business needs a sizeable investment over the next two or three years to stay competitive in the consolidating industry.

Glynn said Park Ridge discussed the transition in Kodak's health group, but in the end decided that the company had the best technology and would stand by the hospital.

"No matter where this ends up, we believe they will be investing to move these products forward," Glynn said.

Kodak said the installation was significant in part because the hospital plans to integrate some of the company's most cutting-edge technologies, such as 3-D medical imaging and computer-aided detection.

Also notable, said R.L. Davenport, chief operating officer in Kodak's health care information systems division: The hospital's commitment to reinvent itself in radiology using the new technology.

The goal of that reinvention is to install systems and processes aimed at finding and delivering the right image at the right time, whether it's a 2-year-old image of a broken arm or an echocardiogram captured just minutes ago.

"If you're a cardiologist, you want that image on the fastest storage mechanism," Davenport said. "But if it's three months or more after a broken arm, you want that to go to the least-expensive storage."

Kodak consultants began examining Park Ridge's work flow this week in the hospital's ultrasound department, said Susan Sproule, senior director of nursing and patient care services at Park Ridge.

Their emphasis, Sproule said, is on helping Park Ridge personnel understand the capabilities of the technology and brainstorm solutions.

"They want it to be our idea. ... We make it work," she said.

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Kodak Health Group

Headquarters: Rochester.

Portfolio: X-ray film, chemistry and processing systems; digital X-rays, laser printers; health care information management technology; dental digital imaging equipment, software.

Revenue: \$2.7 billion in 2005.

Earnings from operations: \$83 million in 2005.

Transition: A joint venture, partnership or divestiture of the unit is under consideration.

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