

the KGH's Technical Account Manager from GE Healthcare organizes monthly and quarterly service status meetings. In addition to the local GE Healthcare FSR and PACS specialists, the meetings include KGH staff interested in the smooth operation of their imaging and biomed equipment. This includes staff from Imaging Services and Biomedical Services, a representative from Cardiology and the Information Management team responsible for the KGH PACS equipment.

"The meeting process, which is based on discussing a dashboard of service parameters available to us via a GE Healthcare customer service portal, draws attention to all the details so nothing gets missed," states Pearson, adding that, "I also appreciate the face-time I get with the GE Healthcare Regional Service Manager who attends our meetings on a regular basis."

Accurate inventory control

Pearson cites the example of how inventory control can be problematic when equipment or parts coming from faraway places such as Tokyo or Germany sometimes go astray, ending up someplace other than Kingston.

"GE Healthcare inventory control, on the other hand, is so accurate. They know exactly what they have and where it is – usually in North America – and they are generally able to get it to us very quickly, even if it has to cross the border from the U.S.," says Pearson.

Quality healthcare delivery

Even "better healthcare delivery" is mentioned as one of the benefits the hospital and its patients are enjoying as a result of GE Healthcare's service efforts. Pearson says GE Healthcare provides additional educational support when needed, at no extra charge. A combination of intensive education by a local GE Healthcare specialist and out-of-town 'masters' programs for technologists and radiologists ensures optimal use of the GE Healthcare equipment.

"Because of the all the education available, we know that when we operate the GE Healthcare equipment, we're using it with full knowledge and in a way that produces best possible results for patients," says Pearson.

KGH recently acquired new GE Healthcare cardiac catheterization lab equipment, and in addition to the fact that the cardiologists liked the software and the way the equipment integrated with other hospital systems, the consistent quality of GE Healthcare service had a lot to do with choosing GE, according to Pearson.

Results

The bottom line at KGH is that Service Level Agreements for uptime on the GE Healthcare equipment are consistently being met or exceeded.

To keep Pearson and her team apprised of service status on all the GE Healthcare equipment, GE Healthcare Service gives KGH access to GE Healthcare's iCenter™ customer service portal and a dashboard showing service performance metrics, such as average response time, first call close rate, service call trends and preventive maintenance compliance, as well as graphs showing average uptime on a quarterly and rolling 12-month basis.

"I can usually wait until we have our periodic service review meetings, rather than having to access the dashboard on a more frequent basis because we don't have a lot of service issues or concerns," says Pearson. "I would rate GE Healthcare service as a solid 10-out-of-10 across the board – it's what they do best."

"Overall, I trust GE Healthcare and have been able to form a relationship where I can go to them with concerns and they are not afraid to admit when they are wrong or when there is a problem or equipment glitch," says Pearson, who concludes by adding that, "I feel very comfortable approaching them about everything and anything and I always get the help I need."

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GE Healthcare

GE Healthcare helps to keep imaging equipment up and costs down

A case study exemplifying how GE Healthcare AssurePoint Services have made a big impact on Kingston General Hospital

As southeastern Ontario's leading centre for complex-acute and specialty care, Kingston General Hospital (KGH) serves almost 500,000 regional residents through its Kingston facility and 24 regional affiliate and satellite sites, including screening centres, dialysis units and oncology clinics. Fully affiliated with Queen's University, this 373-bed research and teaching hospital hosts 2,400 healthcare students annually and is home to 160 health researchers.



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Challenge

As the region's healthcare provider, KGH provides comprehensive diagnostic imaging (DI) services, based on a suite of DI modalities that includes MRI, CT, x-ray, ultrasound, nuclear medicine, mammography and interventional radiology. The scanning equipment supporting the delivery of these services – totalling roughly 50 cameras, scanners and other pieces of imaging equipment predominantly from GE Healthcare – must be kept running smoothly and functioning correctly at all times in order for the hospital to provide the best possible quality patient care and an efficient working environment for its technologists.

"Equipment uptime is also critical to helping the hospital meet its obligations related to wait times for key clinical procedures," adds Karen Pearson, Director of Imaging Services, Kingston General Hospital, whose job it is to ensure the operational status of the hospital's digital imaging environment.

Solutions

- Equipment Maintenance and Service
- Shared Services Solution
- Operational Rigour
- Accurate Inventory Control
- Education and Learning

Solution

A little over ten years ago, an alliance contract between KGH and GE Healthcare established GE Healthcare as sole source vendor for a very large purchase of imaging, PACS and cardiac catheterization laboratory equipment over a seven-year period. The contract included "guaranteed support", which meant that GE Healthcare would have service people located in the local community who were available to be onsite at KGH when needed.

"We were glad to have trained GE Healthcare Field Service Representatives readily available to us every day if needed, and not to have to rely on getting someone in from either Toronto or Ottawa every time a unit needed to be serviced," explains Pearson. This service relationship, which remained in place even after the alliance contract expired, continues to this day based on the success and impact of GE Healthcare's AssurePoint Services.

Service is driven by Service Level Agreements (SLAs) on the different pieces of equipment – DI modalities, PACS and ultrasound equipment, cardiology workstations and cardiac catheterization lab – that are based on appropriate service performance metrics such as call response time and equipment uptime. Uptime is guaranteed, and is measured and reported quarterly as well as on a rolling 12-month basis, with service cost discounts for KGH if service performance targets are not met.

Organized and automated for maximum access

If a piece of GE Healthcare equipment needs service, the KGH imaging technologist submits a service call request for technical assistance or application support from GE Healthcare Service by simply clicking the device console's "Contact GE" icon.

The request is routed to GE Healthcare's Customer Assistance Response Services (CARES) for triaging and if the device is equipped with remote service technology, including GE Healthcare's InSite™ remote diagnostics and repair service, a GE Healthcare Online Engineer is on the line within minutes, logging into the system remotely to diagnose the problem. Based on the findings, the primary local GE Healthcare Field Service Representatives (FSRs) assigned to KGH may be able to fix the problem through remote diagnosis and repair, or may be dispatched to provide onsite hardware maintenance.

"Even if the Field Service Representative can't fix something remotely, they are often able to narrow it down in order to let the service technician know the most likely problem areas," says Pearson. In addition to 'reactive' service based on service call requests, GE Healthcare Service also provides proactive field modifications on the equipment at KGH in response to required engineering changes, as well as planned maintenance actions. These include periodic inspections and cleaning to keep equipment operating at optimal performance.

"GE Healthcare monitors things continually and sometimes goes in and fixes things before we're even aware of them," says Pearson, adding that she is notified by GE Healthcare whenever an upgrade or preventive maintenance is required. These are usually completed during off-hours to maximize equipment uptime and access.

Shared-services contracts cut costs

In its ongoing efforts to be a fiscally responsible operation, KGH's Imaging Services department worked with GE Healthcare Services to reduce costs. GE Healthcare Service was able to reduce its pricing by turning several new service agreements that were about to come into effect into shared-service contracts as well as by converting some existing full-service contracts to a sharedservice model also.

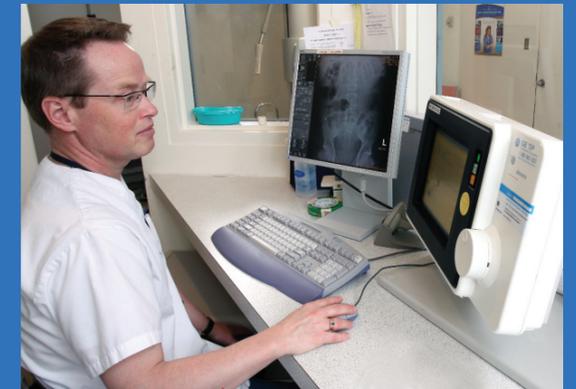
In this model, KGH Biomedical Technologists share frontline service responsibility for certain GE Healthcare equipment, thereby enabling GE Healthcare to reduce its own service effort and thus offer a discounted rate. The KGH Technologists take the same training as GE Healthcare's own FSRs and can order parts directly from CARES, enabling them to do planned maintenance and act as first-responders to service call requests for those pieces of equipment. They also support older equipment no longer under service contract.

"GE Healthcare's shared-services model allows me to cut costs and run a more efficient department," says Pearson. "It also means that because these KGH technologists are always onsite, they can often have things back up and running in a matter of minutes."

Operational rigour ensures nothing gets missed

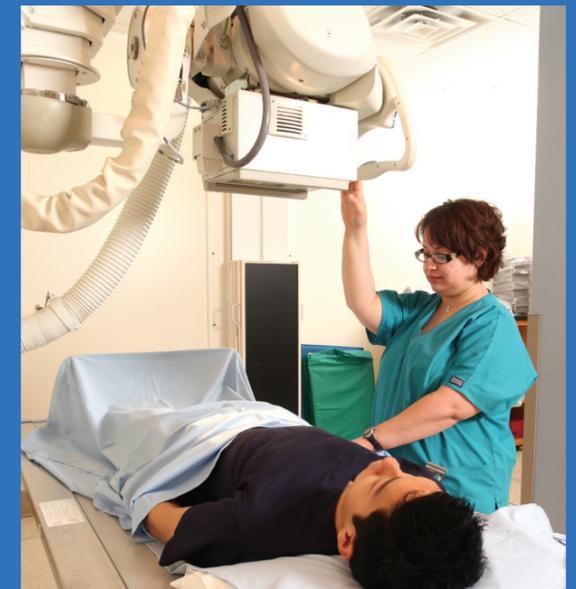
"We have such a diverse group of equipment that it's easy to forget how long something has been going on, or a service item can fall off the radar if there are other, more important things to do," admits Pearson.

To ensure that no service requests get forgotten and that open issues are managed to a successful and timely completion,



"We were glad to have trained GE Healthcare technicians readily available to us every day if needed, and not to have to rely on getting someone in from either Toronto or Ottawa every time a unit needed to be serviced."

Karen Pearson,
Director of Imaging Services,
Kingston General Hospital



"GE's shared-services model not only allows me to cut costs, which helps me with my budget challenges, but because these KGH technologists are here onsite all the time, they can often have things back up and running in a matter of minutes."

Karen Pearson,
Director of Imaging Services,
Kingston General Hospital

