Perfusionists Discuss Value of Electronic Charting at American Academy of Cardiovascular Perfusion Meeting

At the 32nd Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Cardiovascular Perfusion, held in Reno, NV, on January 27-30, 2011, perfusionists discussed the value and impact of computer-assisted bypass and automated electronic records. Their insight was particularly relevant in light of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH) recently passed by Congress to incentivize health care providers and hospitals to implement qualified electronic medical record (EMR) systems. The HITECH Act aims to extend the benefits of EMRs to a wider health care network, the ultimate result of which will be more patient-centered care and enhanced quality and safety of care provided. Click here for more information on the HITECH Act.

Of 20 perfusionists attending one of the fireside chat meetings, four were using electronic charting, six were awaiting implementation of electronic charting, and 14 were still using paper charting. During the discussion, participants touched on the possible or actual advantages of electronic charting, which included:

- Provides tighter, better and easier perfusion parameter management.
- Provides biostatistician-friendly data that can be easily accessed and analyzed.
- Enhances quality control.
- Pinpoints best-in-class performance.
- Optimizes performance through use of alerts.
- Facilitates uniform performance among the entire perfusion team.
- Makes it easy to ascertain disposable lot numbers after the case is closed.
- Automatically compiles an equipment repair and maintenance history.
- Can be used as a teaching aid (using live review and post-procedure data review).
- Schedules and automatically track hours of perfusionist/surgeon pairings.
- Resolves issues between anesthesia and perfusion records.

Getting started in perfusion

To ensure that a hospital's EMR system meets the needs of perfusion, perfusionists must get involved early in the EMR system discussions between hospital administrators and IT department managers. Once involved, perfusionists need to ask a number of important questions when evaluating the various perfusion EMR systems, including:

- Is the system easy to use?
- Will it be easy to integrate with other OR equipment?
- Is it compatible with heart/lung machines?
- Is it HL7 compliant (this is essential to health care information system interoperability)?
- Does it offer connectivity options?
- Can it be configured to meet your department’s particular needs? Can it be adapted to changing clinical circumstances?
- Does the system have data management and editing capabilities?
Why the need for a system specifically designed for perfusion?
More and more hospitals are looking to acquire hospital-wide EMR systems, in part because of the HITECH Act. Too often, input from perfusion is either not sought during the decision-making process, or perfusion gets involved when IT implements the larger EMR system, too late to have any meaningful impact. As a result, perfusionists’ jobs may be made more difficult rather than more efficient. They may also discover the new EMR system does not connect electronically with the heart-lung machines or other critical OR devices.

What should a perfusion charting system look like?
A charting system specifically designed for perfusion applications and integrated into a central EMR system can make your job much easier. One example is Spectrum Medical’s data management system. Designed specifically for perfusion applications, the system interfaces with heart-lung machines and related perfusion OR devices. The technology shows how intuitive and user-friendly a charting system can be. Spectrum Medical’s system offers three EMR components: VIPER, the data acquisition module; VISION, the data management module; and LIVE VUE, a module for real-time viewing and distribution of the clinical data.

Take action now
Registration for the HITECH EMR incentive program began in January 2011. Now is the time to find out if your hospital is planning to implement an EMR system and to make sure that perfusion is part of the discussion. Perfusion electronic charting can be valuable for your department and hospital as well as your patients.

For more information on these products, you can either contact your local Medtronic representative, Spectrum Medical and their respective distributors in certain markets or visit www.spectrummedical.com.