Clinic Case Study
The Heart Group
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

In Quest for Efficiency, SessionSync® Data Transfer Proves Its Worth
Together, Lynn Brewer and Don Pickell of The Heart Group in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, have 60 years’ experience working with pacemakers. From the earliest days, they embraced new developments that could improve their ability to care for patients with pacemakers, ICDs, and CRT-Ds. “If there’s new technology available, we want to know about it,” says Brewer, manager of Pacemaker Services at The Heart Group.

One technology they adopted early on was the Paceart® System, a central hub for acquiring, organizing, and archiving patient arrhythmia and cardiac device data. And when Paceart introduced SessionSync® direct data transfer in 2005, The Heart Group jumped on it. With SessionSync, they can transfer follow-up session data from the Medtronic CareLink® 2090 Programmer directly into patients’ Paceart records. It’s a major improvement over the old, manual way of doing it, according to Brewer and senior technologist, Pickell.

“SessionSync has been extremely helpful in allowing our clinic to run more efficiently,” says Brewer. “Changes are automatically reflected in the Paceart field without us needing to manually change it.”

Brewer, along with clinicians from Cleveland Clinic and others, set out to quantify the time savings they could achieve by using SessionSync compared with other methods of capturing programmer session information. In their study, they found that electronic data transfer via SessionSync software saved up to 2.5 minutes per device follow-up. That adds up to an hour or more each day, Brewer notes.

Even more valuable, says Pickell, is the potential for a decrease in errors due to manual entry: “That makes SessionSync priceless. For me, SessionSync would be worth it just for the accuracy, even if it didn’t save time. But we get both benefits.”

An Efficient “Mini-Hospital”
Brewer manages the day-to-day activities for Pacemaker Services at The Heart Group, which she describes as a “mini-hospital” for heart patients. Her staff also sees patients at the “non-mini” Lancaster General Hospital and provides on-site services at one nursing facility in Lancaster County.

Lynn Brewer
Paceart serves as The Heart Group’s hub for device and patient information, integrating data from multiple sources – programmers for devices from all major manufacturers, TTM (pacemaker transmitters and cardiac event recorders), and remote transmissions via the CareLink® Network.

“We also use Paceart to track miscellaneous notes, comments, and conversations we have with patients,” Brewer says. It all ends up in the Paceart record, along with patient medication and insurance information. Having a complete record of every device check allows Brewer to quickly respond to audits from Medicare, insurance companies, and others requesting verification that services billed on certain dates were actually provided.

“I can query Paceart for a list of all patients tested on a date or range of dates and pull a test for a particular date of service,” she explains. “The name of the technologist and the date are on the report.”

Using the Office Links feature in Paceart (under the Preview menu), she then exports reports to Microsoft® Excel®. She can hide fields that aren’t needed or add other requested information. She then sends the report by email to the auditing agency. “It all stays electronic – that’s the beauty of it,” Brewer says. “The fact that it’s all stored electronically is nice for future reference. I know that we’ll be audited again, and Paceart’s functionality will help me streamline my workflow. We’ve passed all of our audits with flying colors.”

Paceart helps Brewer organize her daily workflow, starting with scheduling. Device evaluations take place every day in four rooms at the clinic. Brewer prints out the daily schedule by room number – a customization in her Paceart program – so she knows to ask at the front desk if a patient hasn’t shown up in the Pacemaker Services waiting area.

As she and Pickell perform device interrogations, they confirm patients’ medications, documenting the information in Paceart. If a patient’s device evaluation shows atrial arrhythmias and the person is not prescribed a blood thinner medication, the technician hand-carries the report to the nursing staff in the EP clinic, right around the corner. The nurse pulls the patient’s main office chart, and an EP physician reviews the Paceart report and consults with the patient.

If the evaluation is normal and requires no immediate follow-up, the technician simply ends the programmer session. SessionSync software on the CareLink Programmer automatically transfers the data into Paceart via the clinic’s Ethernet network. Brewer and Pickell then add comments to the report – using the Comments tab in Paceart – and print it out. “Because the data moves automatically, I know that my report is accurate,” Brewer says. “SessionSync has helped us decrease errors in reporting.”

Brewer and her colleagues also value the convenience of SessionSync data transfer for device testing when off-site at a local nursing facility. Brewer brings the CareLink Programmer, which can store up to 200 sessions, with her. Once Brewer is back at the office and reconnected to the clinic network, the programmer automatically downloads the stored sessions into Paceart. “If I’ve seen 15 patients, within 45 seconds I’ve created 15 follow-up reports on them, and all I have to do is go in and enter my comments,” Brewer notes.

Printed Paceart reports designated for the EP and cardiologist are placed into a binder for an EP physician to review and sign once a week. Once signed, the Paceart report is routed to the patient’s following cardiologist at The Heart Group for review before it is filed in the main paper chart.

Easy Installation, Responsive Customer Support

Brewer finds it easy to use SessionSync and Paceart, even though she doesn’t consider herself computer literate. “If I can do it, anyone can,” she says with a laugh. “It’s not hard to get your clinic set up.”

She credits The Heart Group’s IT manager, Mike Deeley, as instrumental in getting Paceart set up on the clinic network. He also ensures connectivity between the clinic and hospital Paceart users. At Lancaster General Hospital, Brewer’s staff conducts device interrogations for patients, interfacing their device data through Paceart.

“The Paceart applications are easy to install and maintain,” says Deeley, who upgraded the clinic’s early Windows® version to a system that runs on Microsoft SQL, and has installed upgrades such as SessionSync. “More important, I’ve experienced positive customer support over the years. I’ve had a longstanding relationship with several Paceart technicians. Anytime we had a different opinion on how things should be done, they always were willing to listen and work with us.”

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– Don Pickell
The Heart Group includes a heart failure (HF) clinic, and its physicians and nurses rely more than ever on diagnostic information tracked by cardiac devices. Brewer says that the closer integration of EP and HF puts an even greater value on clinicians’ time: “As we become more linked with the heart failure aspect of treating patients, time spent looking at the data and interpreting the data is more important than sitting in front of a computer and entering data.”

Pickell has seen the evolution of cardiac devices from the simplest pacemakers to the latest generation of CRT-Ds and ICDs. He notes, “The more data we have, the more valuable SessionSync data transfer is. Knowing we’re not making data entry errors is very reassuring.”

He likens his reliance on SessionSync data transfer to his recent purchase of a pressure washer at home. “We have a farmhouse with a huge porch, which my dear wife always washed. Now she wonders how she ever managed without the pressure washer. And I already feel that if SessionSync was taken from us, what would we do? We use it every day, for every single patient who has a Medtronic device.”

Note

Brief Statement
Medtronic CareLink® Monitor/Medtronic CareLink® Network

Intended Use
The Medtronic CareLink Monitor and the Medtronic CareLink Network are indicated for use in the transfer of patient data from some Medtronic implantable cardiac devices based on physician instructions and as described in the product manual. These products are not a substitute for appropriate medical attention in the event of an emergency and should only be used as directed by a physician.

Contraindications
There are no contraindications for the Medtronic CareLink Monitor.

Warnings and Precautions
The Medtronic CareLink Monitor must only be used for interrogating compatible Medtronic implantable devices. The Medtronic CareLink Monitor is intended for use within the prescribing country. The Medtronic CareLink programmer system is comprised of prescription devices indicated for use in the interrogation and programming of implantable medical devices. Prior to use, refer to the Programmer Reference Guide as well as the appropriate programmer software and implantable device technical manuals for more information related to specific implantable device models. Programming should be attempted only by appropriately trained personnel after careful study of the technical manual for the implantable device and after careful determination of appropriate parameter values based on the patient’s condition and pacing system used. The Medtronic CareLink programmer must be used only for programming implantable devices manufactured by Medtronic or Vitatron.

For further information regarding Paceart, please call Medtronic at 800-722-3278 and/or consult Medtronic’s website at www.paceart.com.

See the device manual for detailed information regarding the instructions for use, indications, contraindications, warnings, precautions, and potential complications/adverse events. For further information, please call Medtronic at 1-800-328-2518 and/or consult Medtronic’s website at www.medtronic.com.

Caution: Federal law (USA) restricts these devices to sale by or on the order of a physician.