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Proactive diagnosis gets a critical coil back into service.

InSite* OnWatch MRI System Monitoring

A single 1.5T MR scanner serves the entire hospital at all hours—disruptions in service are frustrating and costly. The system has been reliable, but who is watching for symptoms of emerging trouble? Is there a way to detect issues quickly and accurately and enable prompt, scheduled repair?

A GE 1.5T HD MR scanner handles the entire patient load at Swedish First Hill Hospital in Seattle, WA. Inpatients, outpatients, and emergency cases account for up to 300 exams per month, says Terry Austad, lead MRI technologist.

In October 2010, the staff began to experience a fault that limited use of the 16-channel head, neck, and spine (HNS) array coil. The fault, which was intermittent and thus very difficult to diagnose, increased in frequency over time. This problem was particularly troublesome because Austad and his team perform complete neurological exams without having to reposition the patient with the HNS coil.

“At times, the MR scanner did not recognize the coil,” Austad recalls. “As a consequence, we were unable to use that coil. We had to substitute older 4-channel coils. If we needed to do a combination brain and spine study, we had to use separate coils and perform two exams. We had to complete one exam, take the patient off the table and switch coils in order to finish the entire study. The physicians still got their studies, but the exams took longer and disrupted our schedule.”

InSite OnWatch proactive monitoring service from GE Healthcare diagnosed the trouble and enabled the local GE field engineer to make a prompt repair. Online monitoring through InSite OnWatch indicated a problem with the cable connecting the coil to the MR scanner. The GE field engineer used this information to isolate the defective part that was causing the coil connection problem. The field engineer in turn notified Austad and replaced the cable the next day. That resolved the issue.

“I am impressed with OnWatch,” Austad says. “It’s a good service, and it’s comforting to know that the GE engineers have this type of tool to diagnose and solve our service issues.”

OnWatch is not the only GE online service Austad uses. Technologists receive applications training through Training in Partnership (TiP) Virtual Assist, in which they work at the hospital’s scanner while interacting live with an instructor through the broadband Internet connection.

The team also uses the iLinq* button on the MR console to contact GE Healthcare on technical or service issues. “I love it,” Austad says. “The response is almost instantaneous.”

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Terry Austad
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