Image Management Issues: Data Acquisition

Bradley J Erickson, MD PhD
Mayo Clinic
Site Credentialing

• Before a site can enroll any subjects, it will need training on the conduct of the study. It must then demonstrate its ability to perform the study
  – Acquire images using the specified imaging methods
  – Be able to perform any data manipulation (e.g. de-identification)

• Ideally, the requirements should be vendor neutral. In the real world, there are examples where the requirements vary according to vendor

• Should consider requiring the use of a single device
Maintenance of Credentials

- Once a site is credentialed, one cannot assume that it will remain so, particularly for long duration studies
- Equipment drifts
- Personnel change or forget
- Periodic re-credentialing should be considered
Equipment Upgrades

- For most large studies, a site will upgrade equipment during the study
  - Get a commitment that the exact device used won’t be upgraded during that period
  - Develop imaging methods that are equivalent for future upgrades with re-credentialing
Protocol Compliance

• Technologists are generally intelligent people, and as such, they often want to try to ‘help’
• They may also not appreciate that ‘improvements’ can cause important changes
• Methods to automatically, quickly, and pervasively verify protocol compliance is crucial to maximizing the value of data
• Example: Min full TE vs min fractional TE
Electronic Protocoling

- Increasing sophistication of devices can allow most or all details of an examination to be electronically transmitted to a scanner, rather than relying on human input.
- Analogous to modality worklist.
- Some vendors have proprietary ways to accomplish this, but there is also rudimentary DICOM support that would be better.
Prompt Exam Transmission

- The most effective way to achieve high compliance is to provide rapid feedback
- This both lets the technologists know when an error is made, and may prevent the loss of a valuable data point
Implications of Quantitative Methods

• Many quantitative methods are subject to some variability in scanner and environment
• Should calibration data (e.g. morning CT, MR, US, PET QC scans) be included as part of the examination?
• Can some sort of phantom be included in the data sets (e.g. CT scan table, vials of XX in an MRI scan, etc)
De-identification of Data

• Nearly every IRB requires that Protected Health Information be removed and be replaced with study identifiers

• This can be done manually at the scanner
  – This often creates problems for electronic systems downstream
  – This is a human step that can have errors—where is audit trail for this kept?

• Recommend this be done by a dedicated process that is part of the transfer system after clinical systems have completed their piece of work
Use of Imaging for Non-Efficacy Purposes

- Examples: Safety, Enrollment Qualification
- This requires rapid turn-around in most cases
- May require temporary study numbers which can be more challenging to manage
- Responsibility for handling critical findings must be clearly delineated
Incidental Issues

• Incidental findings—who is responsible for what?
• In many (all?) cases, policy requires that studies done for research be handled by clinical systems to assure that all medical issues are properly handled
• This will drive certain requirements for when studies are de-identified, as well as need for a local care team that may not know the patient