

# From Chaos to Calm: Streamlining the Breast Imaging Workflow for a Smoother Clinic Day

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## Chaos

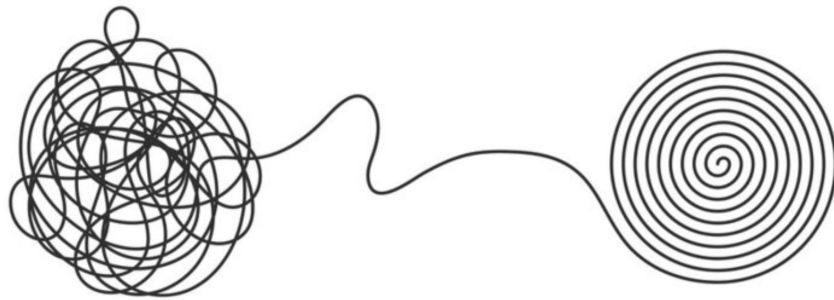
“A state of complete  
confusion, disorder,  
and lack of  
organization”

“A situation with no  
order or control”



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Chaos

Order



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## Chaos In The Workplace

- Anxiety inducing
- Constant fire-fighting
- High stress
- Lack of direction and clarity
- Normalization of dysfunction



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## How Chaos Affects the Breast Imaging Team

- Decreased productivity
- Low morale
- Increased burnout and turnover



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## How Chaos Affects Our Patients

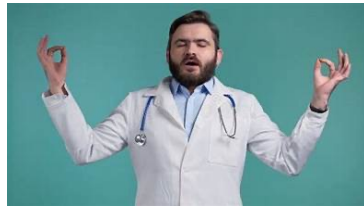
- Reduces quality of care
- Threatens patient safety
- Decreases patient trust
- Diminishes patient experience



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## Calm Work Environment

- Improves employee well being
- Reduces stress by up to 60%
- Boosts productivity
- Enhances focus and creativity
- Decreases burnout and turnover
- Stronger team collaboration



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## Key Elements to Building a Calm Workspace

- Organized Workflow
- Team Collaboration
- Patient Experience



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## Key Elements to Building a Calm Workspace

- **Organized Workflow**
- Team Collaboration
- Patient Experience



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## Organized Workflow

A clear workflow ensures tasks are manageable and deadlines are met, reducing workplace stress and chaos.



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## Breast Imaging Workflow

- Scheduling
- Registration/Education
- Image Acquisition
- Mammo/US/MRI
- Technologist Communication
- Radiologist Interpretation



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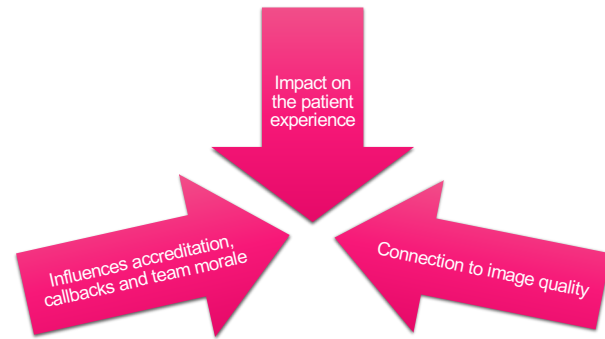
## Breast Imaging Workflow

- Diagnostic Workup
- Reporting
- Interventional Procedures
- Pre/Post Care
- Follow-up
- Tracking
- QC/QA



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## Why Workflow Matters



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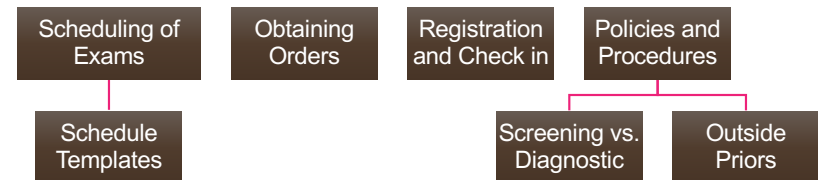
## How to Obtain Efficient Workflow?

- Establish standard processes
- Proper scheduling of exams
- Automate administrative tasks
- Streamline patient flow
- Adequate staff coverage
- Monitor and refine operations



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## Standard Processes



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## Scheduling of Exams

- By providers offices
- Central scheduling
- Dedicated breast imaging schedulers
- Online by patient



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## Schedule Templates

Times Vary  
for Exams to  
be Performed

Screening vs.  
Diagnostic

New Patients

Implant  
Patients

Patients  
Needing  
Assistance

Same-day  
Add-ons

Callback  
Patients



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## Obtaining Orders

No order needed for screening by most insurances, but some software systems may require them before patient can be scheduled

Diagnostic Orders

Electronic

System in place to request order from provider

"Canned" orders with pre-approval by provider



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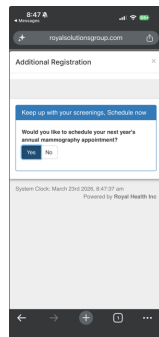
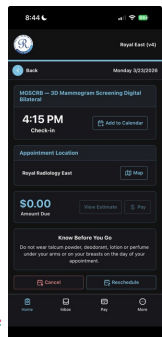
## Registration and Check-in

- General registration and check-in for Imaging Department
- Breast Imaging dedicated Registrar Staff
- Online options from computer or phone



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## Online or Mobile Apps



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## Outside Priors

- Outside priors obtained
- Who's responsible:
  - Providers office
  - Patient
  - Film library/medical records
  - Technologist
- Schedule appointment without priors?



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## Screening vs. Diagnostic

ACR states:

*"A clinical breast finding may be elicited when a patient presents for a screening. If so, a diagnostic mammogram should be performed instead."*



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## ACR Appropriateness Criteria

*"The facility should have a process for converting a screening mammogram to a diagnostic examination (which may comprise both mammography and targeted ultrasound.)"*

Who's responsible?

- Depends on point of communication
- Scheduling/Registration
- At time of exam



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## How Workflow Effects Image Quality

- Proper scheduling of exams – allowing time for accurate positioning and image evaluation (pre and post exam)
- Adequate staff coverage – Technologists/Radiologists
- Use of AI software:
  - Image critique
  - Reading and interpretation



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## Workflow and Accreditation

- MQSA standards
- Patient positioning and image quality
- Data management and tracking
- Technologist training and performance
- System integration and efficiency
- Quality Assurance and Quality Control



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## Workflow and Accreditation

### Compliance:

- ACR (American College of Radiology) site visits, reviews workflows, policies and procedures, image quality, personnel, data from processes
- MQSA – assessed through accreditation and monitored for compliance



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## Workflow and Callbacks

- Diagnostic vs. Technical
- Allotting time in the scheduling template to get patients back in a timely fashion
- Effect on patient anxiety and overall experience



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## The Reality of a Busy Breast Center

- Common Stress Points
- Seasonal or Daily Volume Spikes
- Breakdown in Workflow



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## Common Stress Points

- Radiologist wait time (diagnostic exams scheduled during procedures)
- Late patients
- Challenging patients with limited time or staffing
- Training new technologists
- Software or equipment failure



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## Breakdown in Workflow

- Technical factors
- Logistical factors
- Human factors



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## Technology and System Limitations

- Multiple disconnected systems
- Image routing issues
- Clunky Interfaces



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## Communication and Process Breakdowns

- Technologist to Radiologist disconnects
- In-Person Interruptions
- Delayed reading



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## Human Factors

- Fatigue and high volume
- Season or daily volume spikes
- Distractions/multi-tasking



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## Fatigue and High Volume

- Impact on job satisfaction and performance
- Inefficiency and burnout
  - High Workloads
  - Racing to read
  - Workflow bottlenecks
  - Operational strain



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## Seasonal or Daily Volume Spikes

- Breast Cancer Awareness
- End of Year – patients having exams due to deductible being met
- Procedure days where post imaging overlaps other exams



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## Key Elements to Building a Calm Workspace

- Organized Workflow
- **Team Collaboration**
- Patient Experience

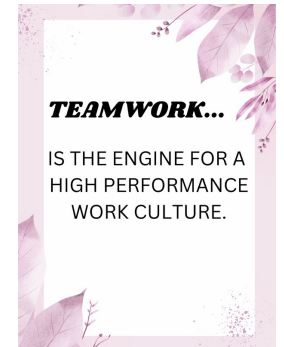


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## Leadership and Support

Vital roles for an efficient workflow:

- Breast Imaging dedicated schedulers
- Breast Care Coordinator
- Film Library/Medical Records staff
- Tech or Nurse Navigator
- Lead Technologist
- Medical or Tech Assistant



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## Supportive Team Collaboration

Open communication and shared responsibilities among colleagues create a harmonious and supportive work atmosphere.



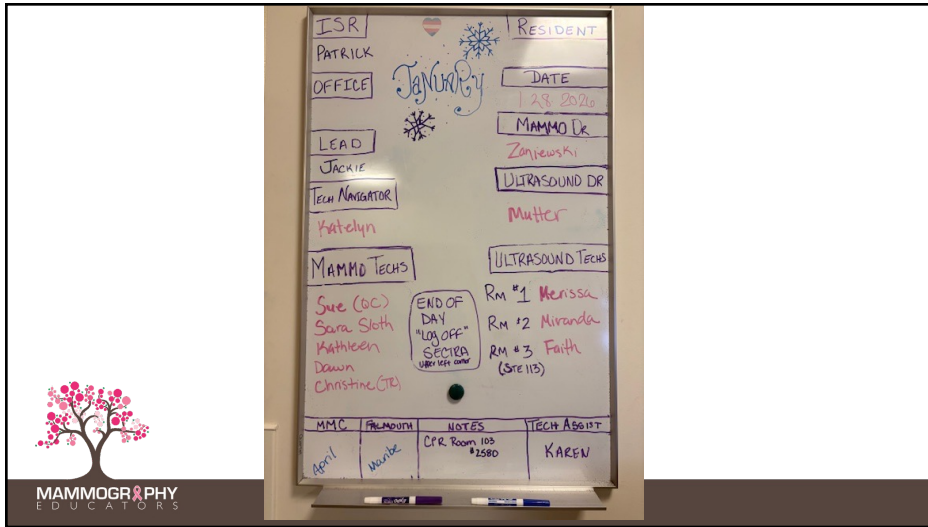
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## Team Huddle

- Review the days schedule – procedures
- Team coverage – whiteboard
- Identify complex patients or possible bottlenecks



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## Workflow and Team Morale

- Breast Imaging Protocols
- AI integration
- Tech/Rad communication
- Technologist empowerment
- Efficiency
- Streamlined processes

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## Imaging Protocols

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## Tech/Rad Communication That Keeps Everyone Moving

- What rads need from techs
- How to streamline case handoffs
- Quick feedback loops that reduce repeats and delays

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## What Rads Need From Techs

- Methods of presenting diagnostic cases:
  - In person
  - Via chat
- How and what to communicate to the radiologist



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## Improving Efficiency: Streamlining Handoff

- Mammo Technologist to Mammo Technologist
- Mammo to Sonography Tech
- Tech to Navigator/Scheduler



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## Quick Feedback Loops for Efficiency

### Benefits:

- Reduces repeats
- Reduces delays

### Methods of sending and receiving feedback:

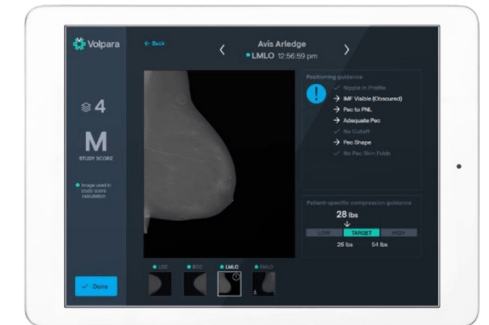
- Electronic
- Live
- Technologist
- Floor “Manager”



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## AI Integration

- Image Quality:
  - Lunit (Volpara)
  - Kheiron
  - Densitas
  - IntelliMammo
- Reading and Detection



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## Technologist Empowerment

- Implement mobile technology
- Real time positioning feedback
- Continuous education and collaboration
- Integrate EMR, RIS and PACS to prevent redundant entry



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## Streamlined Processes

- Software Solutions:
  - Atrix QC Track
  - Royal Health
- SMS/Text message appointment reminders
- Electronic notification of results



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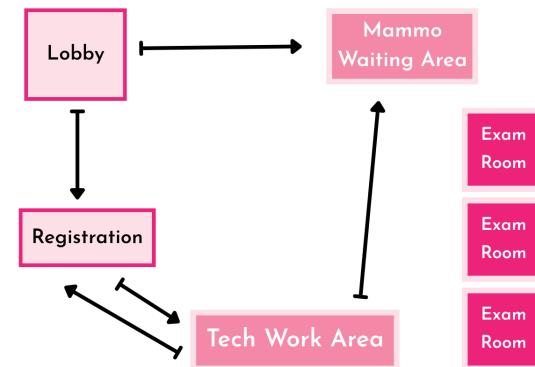
## Workflow Time Drains

- Department/room layout and flow
- Room set-up/turnover
- Changing patients
- History taking
- Performing the exam
- Communication



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## Department Layout



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## Department Layout

- Does it logically make sense?
- Are we working harder, not smarter?
- Are there ways to make it more efficient and save time?



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## Room Design/Layout



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## Preparing to Perform the Exam

- Room set-up
- Correct exam scheduled
- Review of prior reports and images
- Retrieval of priors in exam room



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## Room Set Up and Turnover

- Well clean and organized
- Eliminate clutter
- Well stocked
- Leave the room ready for next technologist



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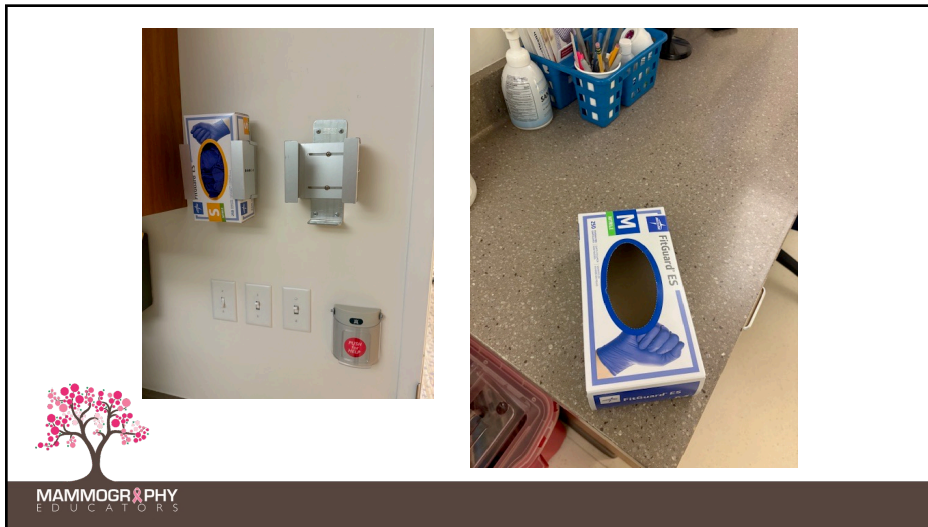
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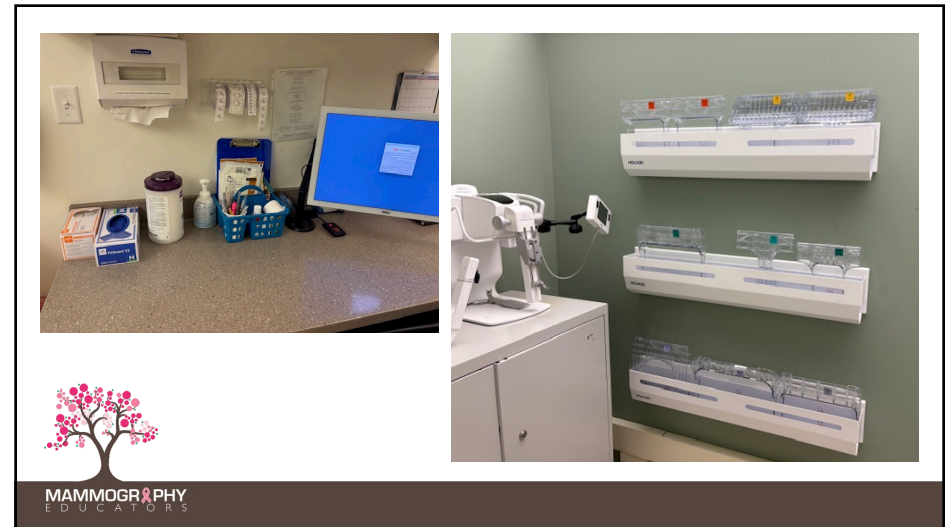
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## Key Elements to Building a Calm Workspace

- Organized Workflow
- Team Collaboration
- **Patient Experience**



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## The Patient Experience

- Efficient flows minimize wait times and patient burden
- Reduced patient anxiety
- Improved comfort via **environment**, better technology and proper positioning



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## Optimal Physical Setting

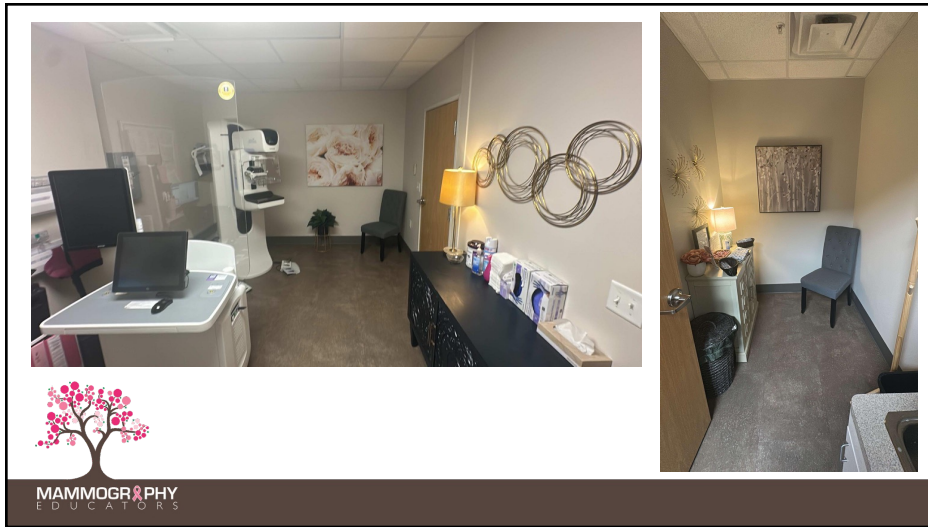
Proper lighting, ergonomic furniture, and quiet zones foster peace and productivity in the work environment.



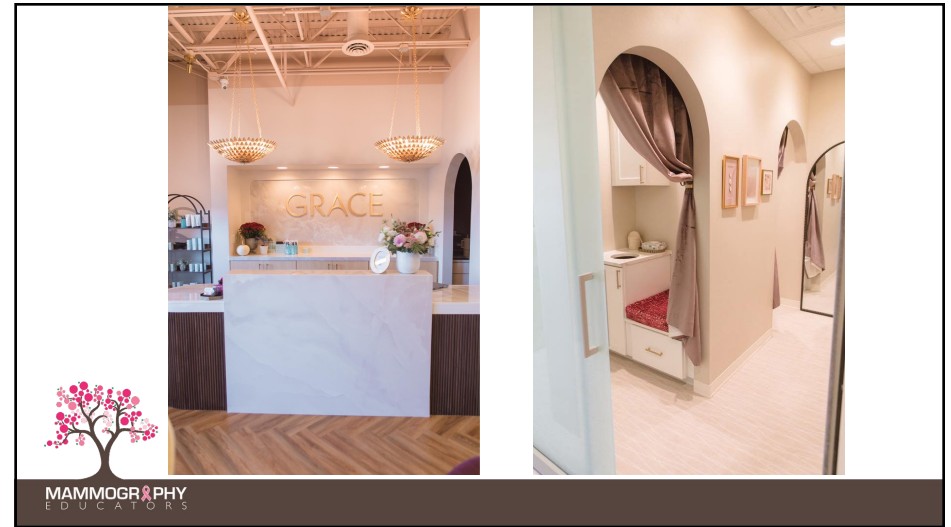
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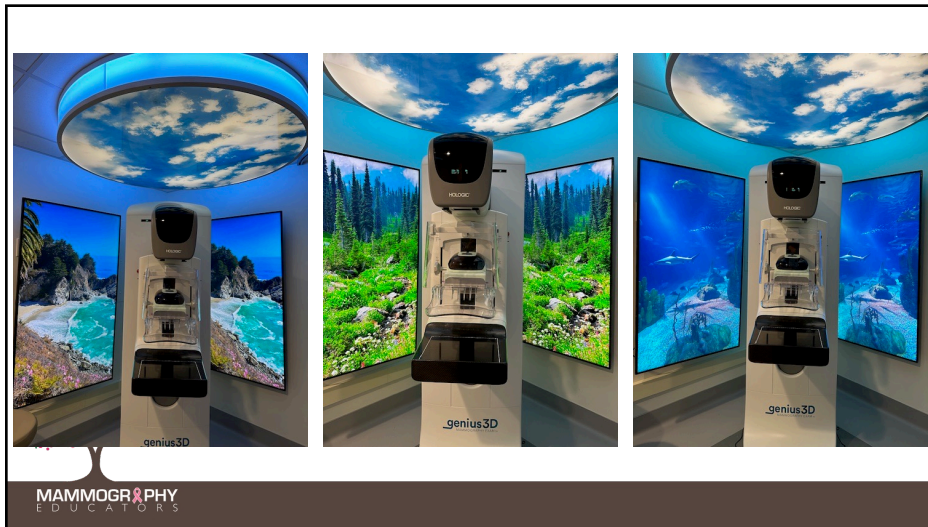
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## Vendor Specific Design

**Stimulating 3 senses**

Sight	Scent	Sound.
		

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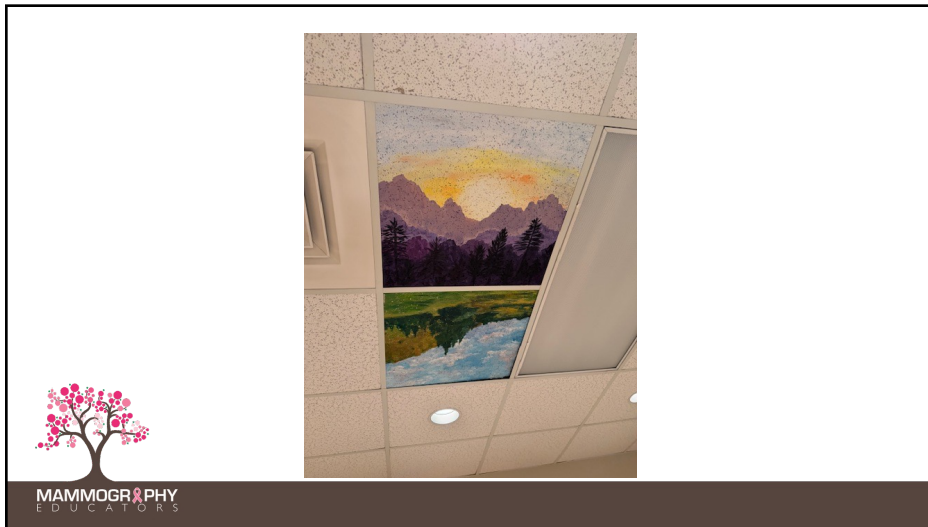
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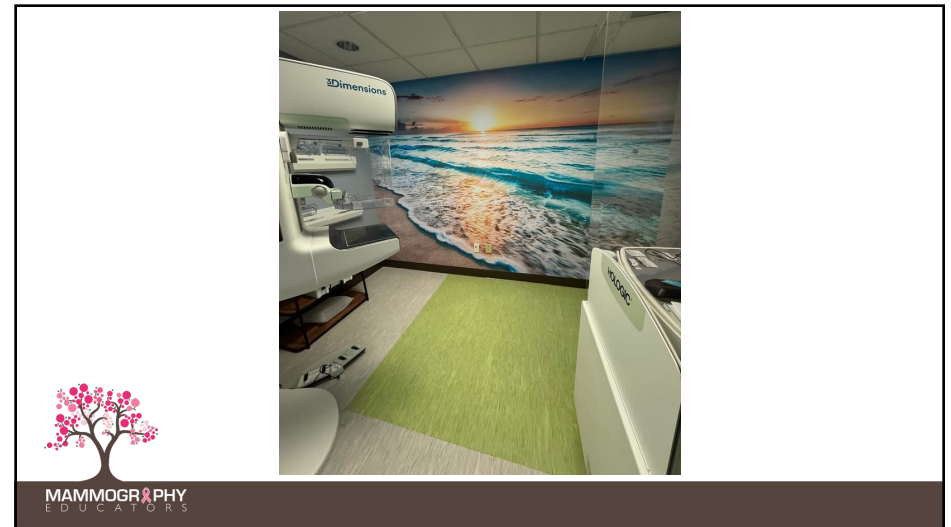
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## Streamline Patient Flow

- Changing Patients
- Obtaining History
- Performing exam
- Imaging protocols
- Communication
- Presentation of exams



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## Changing Patients

- Medical or Tech Assistant
- Technologist
- Changing rooms
- Exam room



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## Physical Comfort

- Comfortable environment
- Gowns that fit
- Shawls or robes
- Lockers and hangers
- Wipes/deodorant
- Aromatherapy



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*What's the Problem?*



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## Donning the Gown



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## Donning the Gown



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## Donning the Gown



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*The Solution?*



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## Capes vs. Gowns



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## Patient Instructions for Changing

- Please undress from the waist up (remove shirt and bra)
- Remove any deodorant or powder under the arms or breasts with the provided wipe
- Put the gown on with the opening in the front
- Please have a seat in our waiting area



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## Obtaining History



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## What's the Problem?



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# The Solution?



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# Obtaining History

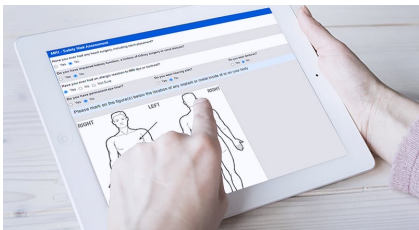
## Obtaining History:

- Paper vs. Electronic (iPad)
- Online via Patient Portal or My Chart
- At time of exam



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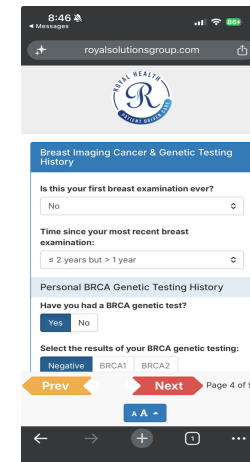
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## Obtaining History

- Utilize automated check-in systems
- Online intake forms
- Assistants that perform intake



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**TECHNOLOGISTS' COLUMN**

### Patient History: Details, Documentation, and Delivery

By Dawn DeWeniger, RT(R)(M); Holly Hedley, RT(R)(M)

As these tasks become increasingly vital, it is important to consider system-level factors that may present access and utilization of these tools among all users, including those from traditionally underserved backgrounds. Policies aimed at ensuring equitable access to breast cancer risk assessment, insurance coverage for advanced imaging services beyond mammography, and patient education about the potential benefits of mammography screening programs among all women at increased risk will be needed.

and ask open-ended questions as well as focused questions as needed.

When a patient presents with a subjective sense of concern, valuable information includes the following:

- How long has the patient to complete the form with something tangible for example, a 3x5 card, photo, disk, or tablet?
- Location of form with click position
- Date the form was last noticed
- Change in appearance or feel over a week first noticed
- Associated pain or tenderness
- Change associated with menstrual cycle
- Whether the form was found by the patient or by the provider during breast examination

In addition to obtaining medical information from the patient, it is important to have the patient physically palpate the technology to assess the location and/or quadrant and abnormal signs such as redness or dimpling of the skin.

Documentation for patients presenting with nipple discharge can be done in several ways to best fit patient circumstances:

- Color of discharge
- Whether the nipple discharge was an isolated occurrence or recurrent
- Spontaneous discharge versus discharge upon expression or touch
- For pain and tenderness, assessment of the size of area affected and whether the pain is generalized or focused

Food, pain or tenderness requires more information from the patient:

- Onset and duration
- Location with click position and quadrant
- Whether the pain/tenderness is intermittent or constant and whether it is associated with menstrual cycle

Continued on page 22

**Emerging Supplemental Screening Tools: Abbreviated Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging and Contrast-Enhanced Digital Mammography (continued from page 20)**

Practical patient education can be a valuable tool for the radiologist when performing diagnostic ultrasound exams and procedures. This educational content goes beyond the patient's medical file to supply key facts relevant to their such as prenatal examinations, mammograms, genetic information, mammography, and patient education about the potential benefits of mammography screening programs among all women at increased risk will be needed.

Now that we have gathered all the data and documented from our history, it is time for delivery. When creating the education to be used in the emergency physician, keep the communication clear, concise, and relevant for your patient. Use a mix of the weekends of this list, or the new journal or the office. With the patient's emergency meeting, this should be a timely process with concise delivery.

- Enter the radiologist office prepared with documented notes in hand. Do not rely on memory.
- Begin with the age of the patient and reason for the examination. Then present with the details you've collected.
- Check all the information is correct, precise and allow time for the radiologist to review and ask questions.
- If the radiologist asks a question that you do not know the answer to, do not guess and do not "I am not sure," then volunteer to find the answer.
- Providing accurate details will allow the radiologist to better assess the patient and determine the next steps in the patient's care plan.

As technologists, we are the voice for our patients and it is our responsibility to reflect, document, and deliver details to the radiologist. Together, technologists and radiologists can use this team approach to provide timely and compassionate care.

**Tips to Get Active and Stay Active (continued from page 17)**

Whether you are able to attend a scheduled meeting, or not, clearly physical activity, in both, encourage yourself to move every day throughout the day. Only to increase it a little more at a time. Remember, any amount of physical activity is better than none. Prioritize your physical health and mental well-being through a better quality of life. Prioritize exercise to improve your physical health and mental well-being through a better quality of life.

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Newton's Third Law of Gravity:  
"For every action there is a reaction."

But ALSO...

For every Reaction there is an Action..  
How you REACT will result in the patient's ACTION!



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## Performing the Exam

- Introduce yourself
- Ask if they have any questions before you get started
- Answer questions directly



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## Clear Communication

- Tell the patient what you are going to do before you do it
- Keep the patient informed and updated
- Apologize when necessary



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## Positioning the Patient

Use standardized methods, such as The Miller Method™, for:

- Efficiency
- Consistency
- Proficiency
- Reproducible
- Ergonomically correct



**Work SMARTER not HARDER!**

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## Patient Education

Pamphlets or brochures:

- About Your Exam
- Dense Breast Tissue
- High Risk Testing and Results
- Lump Letter/Breast Pain Information
- Procedures



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The screenshot shows the American Cancer Society website with a navigation bar at the top including links for Purchase Orders, All Products, All Collections, Free Material Downloads, About ACS, Contact Us, and FAQ. There are also search, user, and cart icons. The main content area displays several educational materials:

- If you're Having a Breast Biopsy - Spanish (4537.01)** - \$0.55
- If You Have Breast Cancer - English (5132.00)** - \$0.34
- Breast Cancer Risk Flyer - English (4622.00)** - \$0.14
- What You Need to Know About Mammograms - English (5011.06)**

Each item includes a thumbnail image and a brief description of the content.

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## Quick Wins to Implement Tomorrow

- Create and implement operational checklists
- Perform team huddles
- Analyze current state of schedule templates and review areas of improvement
- Review current state of department layout and patient flow



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## Long-Term Strategies for Sustainable Change

- Training, cross-education, and refreshers
- Performance metrics that actually matter
- Using image quality data to guide operations



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## Finding the Calm Within

- Declutter your workspace
- Make taking breaks a priority
- Mini-breathing meditations
- Practice mindfulness
- Work/life balance



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It's all about finding  
the calm in the chaos.

Donna Karan

quotechiccy

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# Thank You!

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