

Healthcare AI, Radiology solutions

Radiology's Post-COVID Road to Recovery

[Nuance Communications](#)

June 25, 2020



The speed at which radiology practices can recover from reduced volumes due to the COVID-19 suspension of non-urgent patient treatment will depend on the acceleration of digital transformation initiatives. Adoption of cloud-driven, AI-powered clinical analytics and flexible team operations will greatly facilitate addressing a surge in demand for rescheduling postponed imaging procedures, while simultaneously managing the need to schedule new ones. Those tools are also needed for expanding follow-up tracking, managing productivity and safety, improving care quality and access, and ensuring the financial stability of healthcare systems in a changed world.

The sudden and disruptive [hard pivot](#) that radiologists made as the COVID-19 pandemic struck early in the spring was more than just a series of necessary adaptations. It also signaled the acceleration of digital transformation initiatives that were underway in radiology and other areas of healthcare before the pandemic.

Now, radiology practices are highly motivated to accelerate the use of cloud-based analytics, workflow-integrated diagnostic algorithms, and location-independent radiology operations to address the new priorities of the resumption and continuity of patient care, clinician safety, and improved patient outcomes and revenue recovery.

Resumption and Continuity of Care

On May 6, the American College of Radiology issued [guidelines](#) for the safe resumption of non-urgent care following an 8-week suspension of most imaging. During that time, radiologists reported [25% to 70% reductions](#) in study volumes across all modalities as healthcare facilities dealt with the influx of COVID-19 patients and protected the health of their staff. There also were significant effects on radiology staffing,

operating hours, and budgets.

Several studies indicate the potential for a surge, independent of rescheduled exams, as non-urgent care resumes. One cited a [nearly 40 percent reduction](#) in the number of patients seeking stroke treatment in late March and early April; volumes will pick up once facilities re-open and patients feel they will not be placed at risk when visiting the ED. In another published in [RSNA's Radiology Journal](#), researchers in China found mild to significant lung abnormalities on the CT images of 94 percent of COVID-19 patients upon discharge, indicating a potential need for follow-up care.

Cloud-based [PowerScribe Follow-Up Manager](#) will play a critical role in managing the surge, particularly in tracking delayed follow-up imaging, as well as effectively managing new imaging where needed follow-up is identified. PowerScribe Follow-up Manager uses AI-powered natural language processing (NLP) to automate identification, extraction and analysis of unstructured data from radiology reports and makes that data actionable. It streamlines the tracking process and proactively manages follow-up care by facilitating communication with referring clinicians and their patients to ensure patients get the care they need, improving follow-up compliance and clinical outcomes. Dr. Ben Wandtke, MD, at University of Rochester Medicine Thompson Health (NY) has been a national leader in follow-up compliance through his [innovative "Backstop" program](#) which relies on this powerful solution. The program has saved lives through earlier diagnosis and treatment of cancer and other diseases. It has also increased patient retention, improved revenue, lowered liability costs and provided evidence-based data for population health programs. Other radiology practices nationwide are building similar programs.

Patient Outcomes and Revenue Recovery

NLP-driven clinical analytics and robust tracking management capabilities are an essential combination for automated follow-up management for improved patient and financial outcomes and for [data-driven assessment of radiology performance, productivity and quality](#).

Follow-up management is more critical now than ever. The status quo has evolved and "the new normal" is forcing healthcare providers to brace for what is to come. In order to be as prepared, proactive and efficient as possible while ensuring that none of our patients slip through the cracks, the right tools are essential. We recognize this need and are committed to surrounding radiologists with the support, guidance, and automation to deliver the best possible care. Accordingly, we're offering the one-year no-cost license for [PowerScribe Follow-up Manager](#) to help radiologists prioritize and re-schedule postponed exams during the surge and deliver improved care outcomes going forward.

As an industry, we are learning that analytics, AI and tools for location-independent delivery of healthcare services are the foundation for the successful digital transformation of healthcare. While they were already in use before COVID-19, the pandemic has provided the impetus to accelerate adoption of those tools at scale across healthcare.

That may prove to be one of the few positive outcomes from this global crisis. The sooner all of us regain our footing after such a massive disruption, the sooner each of us can become more adept at living in a post-pandemic world.

To learn more about PowerScribe Follow-up Manager, click [here](#).

Tags: [Digital transformation](#), [Radiology AI](#), [COVID-19](#)