

# What's next



## Healthcare

# A Real View: Radiology's Post-COVID Road to Recovery

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.

**Karen Holzberger**

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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](#).

*The Real View is a Q&A blog series with Karen Holzberger, Vice President and General Manager of Nuance Healthcare's Diagnostic Division. The Real View cuts through the hype and gets to what's real, here, and now. The blog series features interviews and insights from health IT movers and shakers and uncovers disruptive technologies that solve challenges, optimize workflow, and increase efficiencies to improve patient care.*

**Tags:** [COVID-19](#), [digital transformation](#), [radiology](#), [Radiology AI](#)



## About Karen Holzberger

Karen Holzberger is the senior vice president and general manager of Nuance's Healthcare's diagnostic solutions business. Karen joined Nuance in 2014 with more than 15 years of experience in the Healthcare industry. Prior to Nuance, she was the vice president and general manager of Global Radiology Workflow at GE Healthcare where she managed service, implementation, product management and development for mission critical healthcare IT software. Karen attended Stevens Institute of Technology where she earned a B.S in Mechanical Engineering.

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