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Investment in healthcare has been affected by the global financial crisis in all markets across Europe, says Ulf Andersson, Marketing Director for Carestream Health in Europe, with many projects postponed and hospitals very price-sensitive. Many revolutionary new technologies however – and in particular cloud-based services – are helping both address cost constraints as well as improve efficiency, he tells HealthTech Wire.

Looking at the big picture across Europe, what is the outlook for medical imaging systems?

Investment in healthcare has been impacted by the global financial crisis in all markets across Europe. Within the mature markets of Western Europe there is a tension between attempting to contain health costs and a desire to increase productivity. In these developed countries hospitals still need to invest to maintain and improve standards of care. Also, with ageing populations, services need to become more efficient to cope with the resulting financial strain. Despite the recession, the majority of countries of Western Europe are continuing to invest, albeit at a slower, more calculated rate.

Central and Eastern Europe, meanwhile, are composed of a diverse range of markets - all at different stages of development - with some countries still evolving away from the old centralised model. Infrastructure and bandwidth offer challenges but, given investment, these transition and emerging markets offer huge growth opportunities.

Which market areas is Carestream targeting?

As a successful global organisation we target all market areas where there is a need for our solutions, which are sold in more than 150 countries around the world. In today's global healthcare environment, where the mandate to provide better outcomes has never been greater, Carestream aims to add value by delivering flexible, affordable and practical ways to help our customers advance towards their clinical and business objectives.

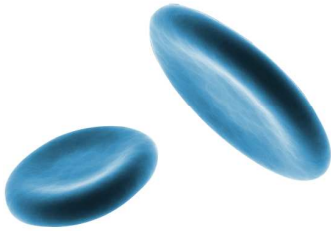
Central and Eastern Europe, in particular, are ripe for healthcare transformation and these markets offer great growth opportunities. Here, Carestream will capitalise on its leading position in many product areas and pursue growth in these new markets with its differentiated solutions.

Our new Vue branding will be the IT benchmark for growth going forward. It merges our lineage of imaging innovation with leading-edge IT technology that includes radiology, cardiology, enterprise workflow, vendor-neutral archiving and cloud-based services. Powered by proven expertise and leadership, Vue will deliver streamlined

workflow, clinical excellence and superior patient care. We are especially excited about our cloud-based services, since they address the cost constraints mentioned above, as well as productivity gains.

Are the economic conditions affecting how purchasers are making decisions and which products they are selecting?

It's clear that the economic conditions have affected the healthcare market. Many projects have been postponed and hospitals are very price sensitive. However, demand for efficiency remains - and in this environment we find Carestream Health very well positioned, as our innovative portfolio can offer customers both advantages. Our cloud-based services, which lower the required capital budget significantly, can leverage current investments and build on existing infrastructure using our vendor-neutral archive and enterprise workflow IT solutions. Our DRX-1 detector is another example of how a customer can convert to a modern DR technique without massive equipment investment and rebuilding of rooms. Our CR-print solutions also provide high efficiency with low cost investments.



Which products have seen good market take-up in the last year?

Carestream is amassing orders for imaging systems based on the wireless, cassette-size CARESTREAM DRX-1 detector. These DRX-based systems enable healthcare providers to boost productivity while enhancing patient care. The detector is the common base across the DRX family, which consists of a range of modalities including a floor-mounted system, mobile retrofits and highly sophisticated multi-detector room solutions. To date the company has sold more than 1,500 DRX detectors worldwide.

The DRX platform offers compelling versatility by allowing detectors to be shared among multiple X-ray systems. For example, a detector can be used in a mobile imaging unit for early morning hospital rounds and then moved to a DRX-1 system or DRX-Evolution suite for the rest of the day. DRX detectors can also be moved from day use in general radiology rooms to mobile units that serve the emergency department at night.

Also, looking ahead to autumn, customers will see the launch of revolutionary new products to our DRX family of solutions to help them make the most of their capital with configurable modular components.

Which technologies are making a major difference in radiology services and how does Carestream address this?

The explosive growth in medical data in terms of volume and complexity, combined with cost pressures, has led many healthcare organisations to consider cloud-based archiving. These services deliver secure, cloud-based storage that enable healthcare practitioners to enhance productivity and patient care, while reducing costs and capital investments.

CARESTREAM Vue Cloud-Based Services, a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model, allows PACS and archiving to be purchased on a predictable fee-per-use basis. Currently the company securely manages more than a billion images worldwide, representing more than 500 terabytes of data, in ten data centres in five countries throughout Europe and North America, with new centres planned for Japan and Argentina.

What is the next major development in imaging systems?

Trillions of medical images are captured worldwide each year, yet despite the growth of the electronic patient record few as yet include

patient images, despite their obvious importance to interpretation and diagnosis.

An image viewer that does not require software download (zero-footprint) neatly fills the need to provide broad access to patient images. Zero Footprint offers many benefits as, like a web browser, it requires no software to be downloaded. Such a viewer is Carestream's innovative Vue Motion zero-footprint, Web-based enterprise viewer that enables convenient on-demand access to imaging data and patient information by clinicians anytime, anywhere.

The way clinicians view data is changing and leading to an increasing use of mobile devices such as the iPad and tablet PCs in radiology. Such ground-breaking technology has emerged from major changes in the world of imaging IT, where the workflow is no longer tied to a workstation. As an independent viewer, Vue Motion is PACS-agnostic and can be integrated with other vendors' PACS systems, DICOM archives or XDS repositories.

Mr. Andersson, thank you for this interview. (HTW)

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