

Customer Report: Upgrade from SOMATOM Plus 4 to SOMATOM Definition Delivers a new Picture of Health

In 1998, the single-slice SOMATOM Plus 4 CT offered Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center the most advanced imaging possible. Over the years, the unit's capabilities were far surpassed, limiting its usefulness. But it remained a valuable trade-in for a SOMATOM Definition Dual Source CT.

By Melanie J. Davis

"After we bought a second device, a SOMATOM® Sensation 16-slice scanner, the SOMATOM Plus 4 was simply taking up expensive floor space. When we had an opportunity to get even greater imaging capabilities with the SOMATOM Definition, we used the Siemens Elevate program to upgrade affordably by trading in the Plus 4. A third-party dealer wouldn't have given us much for it, but we were very satisfied with the arrangements we made with Siemens," says Barbara Richardson, Administrative Director of the Radiology Department at

Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center, Livingston, NJ.

A Smart Business Decision

The upgrade to the SOMATOM Definition Dual Source CT (DSCT) is part of the center's efforts to provide state-of-the-art imaging solutions. She says, "We constantly ask, 'What's the most we can do for our physicians? For our patients? For our employees?' Having the best equipment is one answer to those questions. Dual Energy is emerging and we want to be part of the growth of that

technology. We can now offer physicians that 'special extra', so we have a competitive edge."

Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center provides outpatient services for nearby Saint Barnabas Hospital and other referring physicians, and is responsible for more than 90,000 imaging procedures a year.

The decision to upgrade from the Plus 4 to the SOMATOM Definition was made after the staff extensively researched their options. They evaluated other vendors, and made the decision to lease the Siemens unit.

"We've been with Siemens for a long time, and we have a great relationship with sales personnel and technicians. The SOMATOM Definition is not just a piece of equipment – it's a great relationship," says Richardson.

Maureen Lowe, CT Supervisor, says the center is extremely pleased with the outcome. "You go back and forth on the dollars to make the best choice that will give you the payback that you want, and we're happy with what we're seeing. The Board of Directors is very excited with what the unit can do, and they realize that in diagnostic imaging, the new technology makes a difference."



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Barbara Richardson, Administrative Director of the Radiology Department at Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center, Livingston, NJ

Transition & Training

Installing the SOMATOM Definition was both inexpensive and easy, with the work limited to “spiffing up” the room and making some electrical upgrades. Staff training consisted of Lowe and a senior evening staff member making two visits to the Siemens training center in Cary, NC so they could return and, led by a Siemens Clinical Education Specialist who was on-site in New Jersey for two weeks, train their own staff. “Two weeks was a lot of time for the specialist to be available to us, and it was helpful. I think the transition was very easy for us also because we were familiar with Siemens units and the *syngo* platform,” says Lowe. “Post-processing is so much simpler now because the raw data quality is so high that you’re not doing as much reconstructing. The amount of time we save in that aspect alone is impressive,” she adds.

New Clinical Applications Increase Patient Count

Since the upgrade to the SOMATOM Definition, the center’s volume of procedures has steadily increased as word has spread among physicians about the system. Richardson says insurers’ reticence to approve multiple diagnostic CTs per patient will be offset by the increased type and quantity of procedures the center can conduct.

The SOMATOM Definition’s speed accommodates many more patients during premium peak hours, and Siemens’ radiology information system made it easy to accommodate the increased patient load.

Thanks to the upgrade, Lowe also anticipates an increase in the number of bariatric patients being scanned because the SOMATOM Definition’s large bore and increased power.

Medical Director David Wilson, MD, adds: “Cardiology patients benefit because the Definition scans so quickly, it captures the heart’s action without the need for beta-blockers. We’re less dependent on the patient’s heart rate to get high-quality images. Before, those patients would have been told they



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couldn’t be scanned or had to go someplace else.”

Dual Energy Impresses

As important as the cardiology applications are with the SOMATOM Definition, Richardson says they were just a small part of the imaging center’s upgrade decision: “We bought it for the emerging technology we expect to see from Dual Energy. Now we can expand into a lot of areas.”

Relatively little time has passed since the system was installed, yet Dual Energy is being used on a regular basis. One of the most successful of those

protocols has been scanning kidney stones, which the imaging center does at least once each day.

“We are excited about this application because we can quickly determine whether the patient should be treated with medication or other interventions,” says Wilson.

Wilson and his team all agree that the SOMATOM Definition has provided many benefits to Saint Barnabas Ambulatory Care Center.

Melanie J. Davis, Medical Writer