

New Ultrasound Test Provides Early Warning of Risks for Heart Attack and Stroke



Vascular Technologist Stephanie Nichols performs a CIMT screening exam at VIVA.

Virginia Interventional & Vascular Associates (VIVA) now offers an ultrasound screening test to detect early signs of atherosclerosis, which occurs when artery walls thicken from buildups of fatty plaque. Atherosclerosis is a significant risk factor for developing cardiovascular disease.

The carotid intima-media thickness (CIMT) screening exam measures the thickness of the intima and media, the inner walls of the carotid artery. A VIVA board-certified interventional radiologist compares the measurements with information from the patient's medical history and data from the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study, providing patients with results the same day.

VIVA has established protocols for CIMT, which is a screening exam and not a diagnostic test. The practice has a process in place for appropriate follow-up and makes sure primary care physicians are aware how their patients performed.

Results of the exam can guide patients and referring physicians to make changes in diet, exercise, and/or medications to reduce the chances of heart attack or stroke, explained R. Donald Doherty, Jr., MD, a board-certified, fellowship-trained interventional radiologist and director of non-invasive vascular services for VIVA.

"CIMT screening is a very useful, non-invasive test for evaluating a patient's risk of having a heart attack or stroke," Dr. Doherty said. "It does not require the patient to disrobe and does not involve ionizing radiation."

"Based on the results, we can contact the physician responsible for the patient's care to indicate whether the patient may be at medium or high risk for heart attack and

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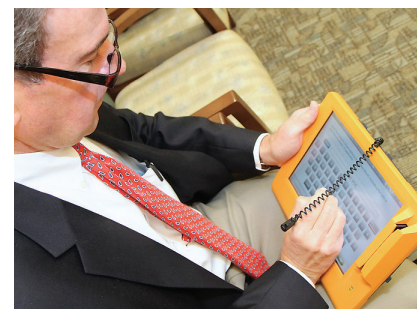
VIVA Patients Report Computer Tablet Check-In Fast, Reduces Errors

The new computer tablet check-in system at Virginia Interventional & Vascular Associates (VIVA), believed to be the first of its kind in the area, has received an overwhelmingly positive patient response since its introduction in late May, said Jennifer Dawson, NP-C, VIVA director.

In August, the Phreesia™ check-in system was also rolled out at four imaging facilities that are part of Medical Imaging of Fredericksburg, a partnership between Mary Washington Healthcare and VIVA's parent practice, Radiologic Associates of Fredericksburg.

Instead of clipboards with pages of questions, patients are provided computer tablets that they can take back to their seats to answer questions electronically. Dawson estimated, based on customer surveys and anecdotal feedback, that 70–80% of VIVA patients now prefer computer tablet check-in over paper forms.

"It was so fast and efficient. I have eight children, and filling out documents all the time over and over is time consuming. It's nice to be able to just click, click, click, and it's done," said Rhonda Smetek of Fredericksburg.



VIVA patients say computer tablet check-in is simplified and self-explanatory.

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Annual Legs for Life® Features Free Vascular Screenings, Education

Legs for Life screenings across the nation raise awareness about vascular disease, which can lead to heart attacks and strokes. At this year's Legs for Life held at Medical Imaging of Fredericksburg on Sept. 29, medical organizations provided free screenings to evaluate patients for peripheral arterial disease (PAD) and abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA).

R. Donald Doherty Jr., MD, a board-certified interventional radiologist with Virginia Interventional & Vascular Associates (VIVA), recently discussed local progress in a national statement by the Society of Interventional Radiology, which started Legs for Life in 1998.

"We decided to hold—and continue to hold—Legs for Life screenings after realizing that many of our patients were concerned as symptoms of PAD became evident," Dr. Doherty said. "We screen more than 100 patients every year and have found that about 40 percent of our participants require follow-up for unrecognized abdominal aortic aneurysms, peripheral arterial disease, or venous reflux symptoms."

PAD symptoms can include numbness, tingling, or coldness in the lower legs or feet, or ulcers or sores on the legs or feet that will not heal. AAA has few early symptoms, but patients with a family history of aneurysms are at increased risk. Patients attending the local event also learned about treatments, alternatives to surgery, and healthy habits, said Pamela McGrath, event coordinator.

Local organizations sponsoring Legs for Life are VIVA, the Mary Washington Healthcare (MWHC) Virginia Heart & Vascular Institute, Stafford Hospital and Medical Imaging, a partnership of MWHC and Radiologic Associates of Fredericksburg.

To make suggestions for future stories, contact Irene Valentino at (540) 361-1000 or ivalentino@rafadmin.com.

Radiologist Spotlight: Thomas T. Medsker, MD

When Dr. Thomas T. Medsker, a board-certified diagnostic radiologist, was a ninth grader in Elyria, Ohio, he was asked to write an essay on a classic topic: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" He envisioned a future in medicine and made good on his aspiration, obtaining his undergraduate degree in biology and medical degree from the University of Cincinnati. He continued his medical training at the University of Virginia, where he completed an internship and residency in diagnostic radiology.

In 1982, Dr. Medsker joined the Radiologic Associates of Fredericksburg (RAF) team. Now he is RAF's most senior partner "by five minutes," he quipped. "Dr. Hewitt arrived at work moments after I did. Dr. Scott and Dr. Allen, who were senior members, retired on June 30. So that makes me the oldest one standing."

Over the years, he has been instrumental in RAF's steady growth. In 1986, he co-founded Medical Imaging of Fredericksburg (MIF), a partnership between RAF and Mary Washington Healthcare. He also served as one of MIF's five original staff members when the facility first opened on Princess Anne Street. MIF started with one IVP/tomo table, two used fluoro units, one ultrasound unit and a mammogram unit. In 1989, a used CT scanner was added. In 2001, MIF moved to its current location on the Mary Washington Hospital Campus. It has since expanded with three additional facilities and a staff of more than 200 associates, including three of the technologists from Dr. Medsker's original outpatient team.

For a decade, Dr. Medsker served as MIF's first president, and then as RAF's president from 2004 to 2010. With a primary focus on women's imaging, he works three days a week at MIF's Imaging Center for Women. The rest of his time is divided among other facilities, where he practices nuclear medicine/ PETCT and general radiology.

Dr. Medsker and his wife of 38 years, Robin, have lived in Fredericksburg's River Bluffs neighborhood for 28 years. Their property was once the site of pre Civil War gold mines. In its current incarnation, it hosts the Medskers' Colonial-style home and spacious garden, which have been profiled in *The Free Lance-Star* newspaper and featured on the Historic Garden Week tour.

The Medskers have two sons. Mike, 34, a Virginia Tech graduate with an undergraduate mechanical engineering degree and a masters degree from the VT school of architecture, lives in Maryland with his wife Debbie, a University of Maryland graduate. Greg, 31, also a VT grad with a BS in business, was co-captain of the VT men's varsity soccer team in 2002. He recently moved to Los Angeles, CA, after signing with L A Models, Inc. He has opened his own personal training business. Debbie and Mike's 10-month-old son, Luke, is the newest Medsker.

Dr. Medsker has a wide range of interests, from gardening to his model train set. Chugging through the basement of the Medsker home, on an "0 gauge" layout he designed, his train empire has been featured in *Classic Toy Trains* magazine. Another favorite activity is Wednesday night basketball games with a cadre of other physicians and members of the business community. "I'm not very good, but it's great exercise and even better camaraderie." He also enjoys snow skiing, rollerblading, and boating on the Chesapeake Bay in their Sea Ray Cruiser, Tomfoolery.

As for his longevity at RAF, Dr. Medsker summed it up this way: "I feel fortunate to have found the right practice, in the right place, and with the right people, the first time around. I am proud of the fact that RAF has maintained an atmosphere of excellence and equitability. The most senior members share responsibilities, including after hours duties, to the same degree as the newest members. After all these years, my colleagues and co workers still endure, and even occasionally smile, at my one liners and jokes. When you like your work and your co-workers, why ever leave?" ■



Based on medical guidelines*, VIVA recommends that the following patients consider CIMT screening:

- **Women ages 55-75 with one or more risk factors.**
- **Men ages 45-75 with one or more risk factors.**
- **Risk factors can include: uncontrolled diabetes, uncontrolled high blood pressure, obesity, smoking more than one pack of cigarettes a day, or a family history of heart disease.**

* Several groups have issued different medical guidelines for CIMT screening, including Screening for Heart Attack Prevention and Education (SHAPE), and the American Society of Echocardiography.

stroke. Then the physician can determine whether the patient needs to be treated more aggressively.”

The American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology have stated that CIMT screening by qualified providers can be beneficial for patients

who are at intermediate risk of cardiovascular disease, based on risk factors such as cholesterol, blood pressure, age, gender, diabetes, smoking, and family history.

VIVA's vascular laboratory began offering the CIMT screening exam to patients in November. Dr. Doherty believes VIVA is the first medical provider in the Fredericksburg area to use the test, which is available at many major medical centers.

VIVA's vascular lab, accredited by the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission for

Vascular Laboratories, also performs vascular ultrasound tests to evaluate upper and lower extremities for peripheral arterial disease (PAD), the abdominal aorta for aneurysm, leg veins for deep vein thrombosis and varicose veins, and arm veins for vein thrombosis.

Fast, Painless Predictor

A standard ultrasound exam of the carotid artery can detect stenosis (narrowing) or structural abnormalities. The screening CIMT exam briefly looks for narrowing in the arteries, but the main focus is the measurement of the artery walls. Using QLAB software, the ultrasound machine is able to obtain a measurement of the innermost layers of the artery.

VIVA's vascular technologists, registered through the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, perform the CIMT exam by placing an ultrasound probe against the patient's neck, where the carotid artery is located. The exam takes about 30 minutes.

Most insurance companies do not cover CIMT screening exams. The cost of the exam at VIVA, due upon patient arrival, is \$175.

For more information about the exam, contact Stephanie Nichols in VIVA's vascular lab at (540) 654-9118, or call (855)-411-CIMT (2468). ■

Computer Tablet Check-In continued from page 1

Kit Lowes of Spotsylvania noted that the computer tablet system makes it easier to correct and avoid mistakes.

“It took the pressure off filling out forms. When I start typing in the medications I take, the right spelling comes up on the side [menu] and I just click it,” Lowes explained. “It's so easy and simplified. It's self-explanatory.” She also appreciated the ability to pay by swiping her credit card through a port in the computer tablet.

Debra Wilkey of Stafford said the system is more relaxing to use than paper forms, with a bonus. “I thought the display was easy to read, understand, and follow. I also like that you can click on interesting educational information about medical conditions after you are finished,” Wilkey added.

All three patients say they have not seen computer tablet check-in systems at other doctors' offices.

Dawson said VIVA's electronic medical records vendor, which serves many medical practices locally, believes VIVA is the first in the area to offer computer tablet patient check-in. She introduced the idea of the computer tablet check-in system to VIVA after seeing it demonstrated at a medical conference.

VIVA's system:

- Interfaces with electronic medical records for more complete patient charts
- Stores information in a secure, confidential manner
- Is designed to make check-in easy and intuitive for most users, with prompts to lead patients through the process
- Provides automatic insurance eligibility checks
- Accepts patient credit card/debit card payments
- Eliminates misunderstandings caused by illegible handwriting
- Offers educational content that patients can view after check-in to better understand their medical conditions

Patients who are uncomfortable with computers, usually elderly patients, are assisted by staff or given a paper option, Dawson added.

VIVA is the interventional radiology and vascular surgery practice of Radiologic Associates of Fredericksburg. For more information, contact Jennifer Dawson at dawson@rafimaging.com, phone (540) 654-9118, or visit www.vivassociates.com. ■



Joan D. Jackson uses the new computer tablet check-in system at VIVA.

www.imagingway.com
(540) 361-1000

Ed Swager, Chief Executive Officer

Radiologic Associates of Fredericksburg (RAF) is the largest provider of medical imaging services in the Fredericksburg, Stafford and Spotsylvania area. RAF's interventional radiology and vascular services group, Virginia Interventional & Vascular Associates (VIVA), performs minimally invasive procedures, vascular lab studies and vascular surgery.

RAF publishes *Imaging Advances* periodically for referring physicians and the greater medical community. For more information, please contact Irene Valentino, RAF Director of Administrative Operations, ivalentino@rafadmin.com, (540) 361-1000.

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New RAF Web Site Offers Resources For Patients, Physicians, Community

Radiologic Associates of Fredericksburg's Web site, www.rafimaging.com, has been redesigned for easier navigation, with added information of value to referring physicians, patients, and the community.

"We see our Web site as a continually evolving resource," said Daryle L. Darden, MD, the radiologist leading the redesign. "Our redesign has enhanced navigation and content, and social network integration is coming soon."

Vishal Bindal, MD, MBA, one of the radiologists involved in planning the new Web site, noted several key features.

- Useful information about what radiology is, and what radiologists do
- Descriptions of medical imaging tests and procedures
- Helpful contacts, including information on how to schedule an examination
- Maps of each location with links to directions
- Hours of each location

The new Web site also makes it easier to search RAF's board-certified, fellowship-trained physicians by name or by medical subspecialty. For example, a person clicking on "cardiac imaging" would find that the section chief is Neil Green, MD, and three other RAF radiologists are also subspecialty trained to interpret cardiac MRI, coronary artery CT, and aortic imaging.

RAF's interventional radiology and vascular surgery practice, Virginia Interventional & Vascular Associates, is currently working on a refresh of its Web site, www.vivassociates.com. ■

