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The Difference between PACS, RIS, CIS, DICOM:

Your Guide to PACS, RIS, CIS, and DICOM

Choosing the best solution for your clinic's radiology workflow is no easy feat. Check out our guide below to discover what PACS, RIS, CIS, and/or DICOM solutions are right for your practice.

	PACS	RIS	CIS	DICOM
What does it mean?	Picture Archiving and Communication System	Radiology Information System	Clinical Information System	Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine
What is it?	A PACS platform allows healthcare practitioners to digitally store and retrieve images captured by healthcare imaging systems. By storing images on the cloud, PACS allows practitioners to access patient images anywhere and at anytime.	A RIS is a software system designed specifically for use in radiology clinics. Workflows, patient images, scheduling, billing, and other mission-critical information can be managed within the platform.	CIS platforms tend to focus on critical care environments, such as intensive care units (ICUs). Like the other platforms included on this list, a CIS can typically interface with other, more specific systems, such as PACS, RIS, and EHR (Electronic Health Records)	DICOM is a standardized, universally-accepted file indexing system for the storage of images, records, and other digital files consisting of patient health information. DICOM architecture is designed for efficient, compliant, and secure file storage.
What makes it unique?	PACS platforms generally allow for easier, more efficient, and value-added image management. Although a radiology clinic may use other systems that include image storage and management, integrating a PACS module can make image manipulation and sharing faster and easier within the broader clinical workflow.	RIS platforms offer radiology clinics a full suite of information systems and clinical workflow capabilities designed specifically for use in a radiology practice or hospital. Typically, radiology clinics benefit from having a RIS as their core IT system, with PACS and other functionality-specific integrated as needed or desired.	Given their core design and intended purpose, CIS platforms benefit radiology teams working in a critical care environment. Similar to RIS, CIS can integrate extensively with PACS, EHR/EMR, and other systems that offer deeper control and functionality over images, patient records, and other specific types of health information.	As a file storage and indexing system aligned to universal security and compliance standards, DICOM plays a key role in many contemporary health systems. It is likely that any platform a radiology clinic adopts will leverage a DICOM storage solution to make file management easier in collaborative care environments.

The Best Solution For Your Radiology Workflow

Choosing the best solution for your clinic's radiology workflow depends on several factors. If your radiology clinic exists as part of a larger system – such as a hospital or academic institution – it's likely determined by your organization's governance structure and it's likely that you already use DICOM as your file management standard. Here, you may be better off requesting specific additions that meet your needs, such as PACS for image management.

Smaller clinics, including private practices, may face more difficult decisions regarding which solutions to implement, as well as when to implement them. Generally, a smaller clinic can use multiple, integrated solutions – such as a RIS for primary structure and workflow, EHR/EMR for patient records, and PACS for image management – that individually excel at meeting their unique needs.

Ultimately, no matter your organization's size, it is important to compile a list of your clinic's most urgent and high-value needs and work with vendors to learn how their solutions address those needs and improve efficiency.

Choosing a PACS Solution | Frequently Asked Questions

What are the advantages of integrating PACS with RIS?

By integrating PACS with RIS, practitioners usually improve the efficiency of care by making their radiology image files more accessible, as well as making the manipulation of those files more intuitive. A RIS user interface is broad, and not designed specifically with image manipulation in mind: therefore, using a PACS to handle this component of clinical workflow makes tasks associated with image capture, storage, chart interfacing, and retrieval faster and easier.

What's the difference between PACS and DICOM?

PACS is a specialized platform focusing on image management, while DICOM assists in the general storage and indexing of files containing medical information. However, because DICOM has established itself as an industry standard, a high quality PACS will be capable of storing and retrieving files housed in a DICOM system.

Discover more FAQs at ultralinq.com/guide-to-pacs

Want more information? Read our What to Consider When Switching to Cloud-Based PACS White Paper. To learn more visit UltraLinQ at ultralinq.com/contact-us to discover a PACS solution tailored to your practice.

UltraLinQ

UltraLinQ Healthcare Solutions, Inc.
3015 Carrington Mill Blvd, Ste 480
Morrisville, NC 27560
sales@ultralinq.com | +1 800 227 2956