



PathView Systems, Ltd.

## Blog - The Latest

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A tracking system is not just simply the printing of bar-codes on specimen, blocks, and slides. This is only the beginning.

Bar-coding the different materials found in the histology and cytology laboratories, for that matter, simply provide a quick and accurate mechanism to uniquely identify these materials. The real 'magic' is how various computer systems use this capability.

PathView believes that tracking system functionality is such a fundamental requirement that we have built an entire Laboratory Information System (LIS) around this functionality. Our LIS cannot be purchased without tracking. It's not the 99.9% of specimen, slides or blocks that are routinely processed that create issues in the laboratory. It's those blocks and slides that are 'lost' or misplaced or misidentified which create the errors and road blocks in your laboratory. Consider that on any given breast specimen, you may have 10 to 15 blocks which may yield another 1 or 2 slides and you suddenly find that on 1 case you can have 30 different materials to label, track, and analyze. Having an LIS that incorporates a tracking system at it's core has multiple benefits:

- Tracking happens behind the scenes so there are no extra steps to the daily workflow.
- Absolutely everything that occurs to any piece of material that is associated with a case can be displayed in a single screen.
- At every step of processing, no matter what the material type, an automatic inquiry displays absolutely all facets of the case to the person working with the material.
- Quality control commentary and actionable alerts can be entered and displayed to let everyone in the laboratory know what is going on with the case.
- Management reports provide detailed statistics to the laboratory manager. A limitless number of reports can be customized by the manager to analyze any specific step of the workflow process.
- Tracking steps are user configurable and may be temporary or permanent in nature. New workflow steps may be trialed and analyzed for success.

If you're organization is not in a position to consider a new LIS, consider the following issues which may affect your middle-ware selection:

- Cost
  - A tracking system may cost as much as \$300,000. To provide some sort of comparison, the typical PathView software cost for a 5 pathologist laboratory is \$250,000.
- Enterprise Wide Tracking
  - In multi-site organizations or organizations with many private clients, consider that a middle-ware tracking system simply tracks material AFTER it has reached the laboratory. Many errors occur before the specimen reach the laboratory and having two separate systems track the various workflow steps can cause multiple difficulties.
- Data Transfer to the middle-ware product
  - How will information get into the middle-ware tracking system? Will it have to be manually accessioned/entered or will there be an interface? If there will be an interface, there may be an interface cost for either direction and from either or both vendors (current LIS and middle-ware vendor)
- Data Transfer from the middle-ware product
  - How will information get OUT of the middle-ware product or put another way, does the

pathologist or secretary need to see information gathered/stored by the tracking system? It's always nice to see the complete picture in a single presentation so keep this issue in mind.

- System Maintenance
  - Who is going to configure, manage and maintain the tracking system? This is going to be an entirely separate computer system in your lab. Will your IT department support it, maintain it, administer it, etc. Who will understand and set up the files, etc.? What is the maintenance cost of the tracking system from the middle-ware vendor?
- Pending Displays
  - Are comprehensive pending displays available and easily selectable?
- Management Reports
  - Are sufficient reports available? Are reports customizable so that new trends and trials may be analyzed?
- Grossing
  - Many laboratories are now scanning copies of requisitions into their LIS. Will these be available in the tracking system?
  - Will the patient history be available in the tracking system? Is this required?
- Hardware
  - Are PCs required at every cutting and embedding station? This will add to the system cost and may present space challenges.
- Instrument Compatibility
  - Does the middle-ware/tracking vendor selection restrict your purchase of future instrumentation? Some vendor's tracking systems only work with their own instrumentation.

In summary, there are two general approaches to tracking material in the histology and cytology laboratories. We clearly believe that the best choice is to track material in the AP/Cytology LIS. However, in situations, where this is not practical, middle-ware vendors are an alternative. In the latter approach appropriate attention must be given to the issues inherent in that solution.