# How to Successfully Implement Histology Tracking Software

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**Julie McDowell:**

Few pathologists receive training on laboratory IT issues or how to manage a new installation. In this CAPcasts, Dr. John Sinard discusses the educational case he has developed to teach planning tools related to successfully implementing histology tracking software. Dr. Sinard founded the pathology informatics program at the Yale School of Medicine. Implementing a histology tracking system seems like an IT thing. Dr. Sard is this course more for technical people?

**Dr. John Sinard:**

Actually, a common misconception is that informatics is all about technology. In fact, informatics is about integration of people, process, information, and technology. That integration requires an understanding of all four components. Simply focusing on the technology won't get the job done. While it might seem tempting to step into the background and let the IT folks run this show, if you do that, you'll almost certainly be disappointed with the result. Technology has to fit into the workflow. If it doesn't, it won't be used to its full potential. It may not be used at all. IT folks don't understand your workflow. They look at problems from a computer system perspective and from what people could do. They don't have the perspective of knowing what pathologists and laboratory technicians actually will do. That requires the input of your frontline workers and a thorough understanding not only of the current workflow, but also what parts of the workflow might be changed and what parts can't be changed.

**Julie McDowell:**

Now, what kinds of things can go wrong in implementing a histology tracking system?

**Dr. John Sinard:**

The major risk is not being fully prepared for the implementation. That means preparing all four components which have to be integrated. The people involved need to know what to expect and need to be on board. Initially, it will seem like you're asking them to do more work. Scanning blocks and slides, for example, at various points along the way is something they didn't have to do before. The time savings comes from restructuring of the whole process, not having to track down logs or look for the right set of labels or look for missing blocks or slides. Then of course, there's the improvement in patient safety. Other work practices need to be examined and modified, like making sure that each slide is uniquely identified. And the workstations and histology need to have the appropriate technology added, computers, barcode scanners, and printers.

**Julie McDowell:**

Now, Dr. Sinard, is this course only for people who are planning to implement a tracking system in their histology lab?

**Dr. John Sinard:**

Actually, the course is for everyone. While admittedly, I am somewhat biased having written the course, the histology asset tracking system is simply used as an example of a major software implementation. The underlying principles discussed in the course apply for almost every major software implementation. The course emphasizes the role that the pathologist could and should play in the planning, design, and deployment of major software upgrades and the introduction of new technology.

**Julie McDowell:**

Well, thanks for this discussion. Any final comments before we close?

**Dr. John Sinard:**

I would just recommend that pathologists that you get involved. We're all busy, but the time invested upfront in the planning stages of any technology introduction will more than make up for itself in a more seamless workflow and increased efficiency. Plus, there's the time that you will save from not having to deal with a bad implementation.

**Julie McDowell:**

Well, thank you again, Dr. Sinard. To learn more about this course entitled Implementing Histology Tracking Software Successfully, please visit the learning section of cap.org where you can find this in related courses listed under informatics case-based education.

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