

# M.D. NEWS

Special Feature



(L to R) UltraScan chief financial officer, Matt Molchan, and Mickey King, President/CEO.

## UltraScan

Experts in Mobile Medical Imaging

# UltraScan, Inc. Brings Mobile Cardiac and Vascular Imaging to Your Office

By Mariann Main

The progression into 21<sup>st</sup> century medicine reveals three overriding truths: First, office visit profitability is down for internists and general practitioners. Second, the first wave of baby-boomers is now reaching their 60s, requiring more regular office visits to those generalists who are watching their practices shrink. And third, perhaps the most sobering statistic of all: more than 70 million Americans have one or more forms of cardiovascular disease (CVD), according to the American Heart Association.

Sometimes from the grimmest of realities, ingenuity arises. As a medical entrepreneur, Mickey King, founder, president and chief executive officer of UltraScan, determined a need in the medical community and addressed it. Beginning his latest business endeavor in 1996, with one mobile ultrasound van and three registered technicians, today the company encompasses a fleet of

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more than 25 service vehicles, a full-time staff of 55 registered ultrasound and nuclear medicine technologists, a Macon satellite office and a current client list of 144 physician offices and hospitals throughout Georgia. Providing both mobile scanning services and permanent staffing and equipment to several area hospitals and physician offices, the company is the state's largest provider of mobile ultrasound and nuclear cardiology services for cardiac and vascular imaging.

**UltraScan President/CEO, Mickey King, unloads an ultrasound machine at The Emory Clinic.**



PHOTO BY LELAND HOLDER

The concept is simple. “Internists and general practitioners just can’t make it on office visits anymore,” said King. “These physicians must provide ancillary services to stay in the game.” UltraScan’s goal is to provide nonspecialty physicians an opportunity to diversify their practices and provide convenience to their patients. “Specialists feed off the gatekeepers, and we are helping those gatekeepers remain competitive in a changing medical arena,” adds Matt Molchan, chief financial officer for the company. “The physicians are pleased not just by the ability to diversify and grow their practices, but also the ability to manage the patient and remain in control of his or her course of treatment,” said Molchan.

## PRACTICE DIVERSIFICATION AND GROWTH

UltraScan’s services provide a means for medical practice diversification and growth. “A physician using our service is able to provide additional services and diversify the practice’s services, which leads

### Commitment to Community

Giving back to the community is an important business element to both King and Molchan. Two years ago when Chattahoochee High School football player Ryan Boslet died from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) during a spring practice, UltraScan determined a community need in preventing future deaths of young area athletes and started **Heart Screens for Teens**. Developed through a unique partnership with Children’s Cardiovascular Medicine, an UltraScan vehicle travels to area high schools and offers young athletes an echocardiogram for the nominal fee of \$58. This test determines whether the athlete suffers from HCM, a severe heart defect.

Approximately 3,200 student athletes have participated in the exam, with 2 – 3 percent of them requiring further testing and additional physician follow-up. “Between 2002 and 2003, five high school student athletes died in Georgia,” laments King. “If we can save one child’s life through the Heart Screens for Teens program, it will be worth it,” states King. The Coca-Cola Company has been a major supporter of the program. An essential component for the success of the program is the participation by a pediatric cardiologist. “Reading a pediatric echocardiogram is a whole different ball game from that of an adult’s,” explains King. “Luckily, Children’s Cardiovascular Medicine is as dedicated to the program as we are,” mentioned King.

Being of Tennessee roots, giving back for Mickey King also includes the funding of a University of Tennessee pharmacy scholarship, awarded yearly to a student from his home county. Through this association with his alma mater, King is finalizing plans to expand UltraScan services into Knoxville.

Other targeted expansion cities beyond Knoxville include Memphis and Nashville within the next three years, along with an Atlanta market increase. Additional Macon services are on the horizon, with the recent ordering of a second mobile nuclear cardiology unit, which will be based permanently in that city. “The start-up cost per unit is close to \$300,000; therefore, you don’t want to expand too quickly,” explained King. “The one thing that is truly holding us back is a short supply of qualified technicians,” said King. “Presently we have more patients than what we can scan, states King. “But, we’ve got to be hungrier than everyone else in this business,” adds Molchan. “Our professional reputation is everything in this business. We’re only as good as our last scan,” stated King.

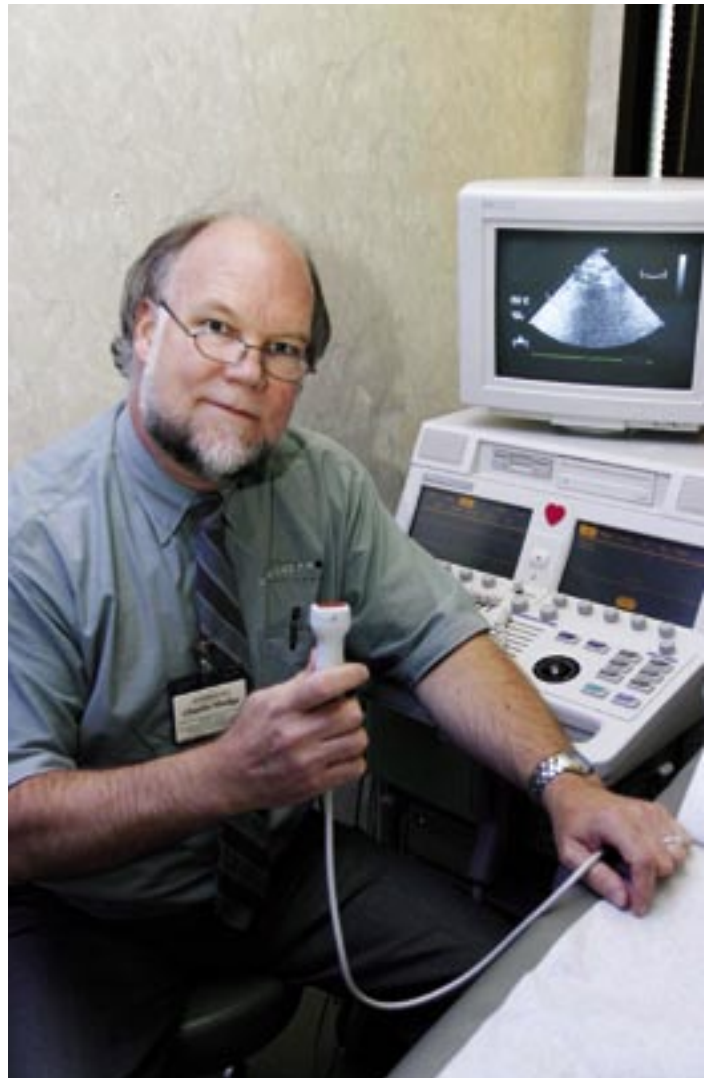


PHOTO BY LELAND HOLDER

**Charlie Mudge, RDCS, RVT, RDMS, UltraScan Technologist**

to significant financial growth,” said King. “We’re leasing them the equipment and the technologists for a flat monthly fee, with visits either weekly or bi-weekly to the physician’s office. This way the patient goes back to a doctor they already know, and that physician is able to provide that scanning procedure,” said King.

Changes in Medicare payment policies that took effect on October 15, 1996, allowed physicians the flexibility of leasing equipment and contracting leased employees. “Our office visits exploded overnight,” said King. Prior to providing the mobile service, UltraScan served as a contract provider of ultrasound technicians and as a leaser of equipment to hospitals and fixed-site facilities, which continues today. “The Medicare changes gave UltraScan an entirely new market, by providing leased equipment and employees directly to the family practice and internal medicine doctors within their offices,” added Molchan.

## IMPROVING PATIENT CARE

Patient convenience is another driving factor behind the UltraScan service growth. Citing the “hassle factor” for a patient,

the convenience of going back to a physician's office, where there already is an established relationship, is much easier than the stress of being referred to a specialist or hospital. According to Molchan, "the patient is pleased because there are tremendous time-savings." Being referred to a specialist or hospital often requires additional time to fill out paperwork, meet with an unknown physician, and travel to an unfamiliar area or city. "Our services completely alleviate that stress to the patient," added King.

Using a revolutionary Internet-based digital service for medical imaging, UltraScan can make test results available to the patient's primary care physician within 24 hours. "Our service provides a much quicker turn-around of test results in comparison to most fixed-site or hospital imaging centers," stated King. Using software and Internet services has been a tremendous leap in how quickly studies can be read and by whom. "A study can be completed in the morning, the images are then automatically forwarded to the in-box of an Emory cardiologist, for example, via the Internet, allowing the cardiologist to read the images instantly with the click of a button," explained Molchan. "The completed report is then returned to the patient's physician,

**"Medical imaging is truly an art form – how the technologist manipulates the ultrasound probe or settings . . . to achieve the images a physician desires," states Mickey King, President/CEO, Ultrascan.**



PHOTO BY LELAND HOLDER

## **I**t's been seven years since we outsourced services to UltraScan.

—Paul Hammonds, executive director, The Emory Clinic

where the UltraScan test occurred, and any medical issues can be addressed immediately," added King.

### **HAPPY EMPLOYEES, HAPPY PATIENTS**

Providing permanent staffing solutions for hospital-based cardiology and radiology departments is another feature in UltraScan's arsenal of services. The company has the exclusive employment contract for both Northside-Forsyth Hospital and The Emory Heart Center for echocardiogram and nuclear medicine services, thus taking the headache out of the staffing process, according to King. Having qualified and happy employees remains essential to the company's success. "Our personnel are full-time UltraScan staff members, with complete health and retirement benefits," said Molchan.

Keeping their employees happy and satisfied are important components to UltraScan's retention rate. King speaks proudly of a technician he hired while associated with another company, and prior to his establishing UltraScan. "That was 17 years ago, and the technician is still with me today," stated King. The average tenure of experience for an UltraScan technologist is 10 years. "The only thing slowing our company's growth is the finite number of experienced technologists," explained King. "This is leaving hospitals in a precarious position, because they are scrambling for qualified staff. The only people available are right out of school, since we've hired away most of the experienced workers (for the industry)," stated King. Therefore, King thinks that anyone receiving a test through his company benefits from a far superior product in comparison to a non-UltraScan service provider. "Medical imaging is truly an art form — how the technologist manipulates the ultrasound probe or the settings on the nuclear camera, how they tune the machine to achieve the images a physician desires," further explained King.

Echoing these sentiments is Paul Hammonds, executive director of The Emory Clinic, for Internal Medicine. "It's been seven years since we outsourced services to UltraScan," stated Hammonds, which includes the staffing of 10 to 12 technicians at nine to 10 locations. "We've had a wonderful experience with all of their technical and professional staff, and having them provide the machinery has been positive. I've never had a down day since we contracted with UltraScan," mentions Hammonds. "Our profits are up, patients are happy and the physicians are very pleased," concludes Hammonds.

*For more information, please contact Mickey King at Ultrascan, 770.813.8323 or [www.ultrascaninc.com](http://www.ultrascaninc.com).* ■