



Take your practice to the next level.



BY KRISTINE A. MORRILL, BS

HOW TO GET YOUR TEAM TO EMBRACE NEW TECHNOLOGY

Follow these four steps.

When attending conferences and exhibitions, it can be tempting to purchase or trial a diagnostic device after seeing the clinical results and talking to colleagues who have first-hand experience with the technology. Excited to add the device to your practice, you return and introduce it to your team—and the response is less than enthusiastic. To you, this new device represents an opportunity to offer something cutting-edge to patients. To your staff, it is another task to perform in the limited time they have to work up a patient. One year later, that whizzy new technology is gathering dust in a dark corner of the clinic, and you are wondering what happened to it.

It is possible to avoid this scenario by establishing a process that guides the introduction of new devices into your practice. This can be done in as few as four steps (see *4 Steps to Introducing New Technology*).

A CLOSER LOOK: THE FOUR STEPS

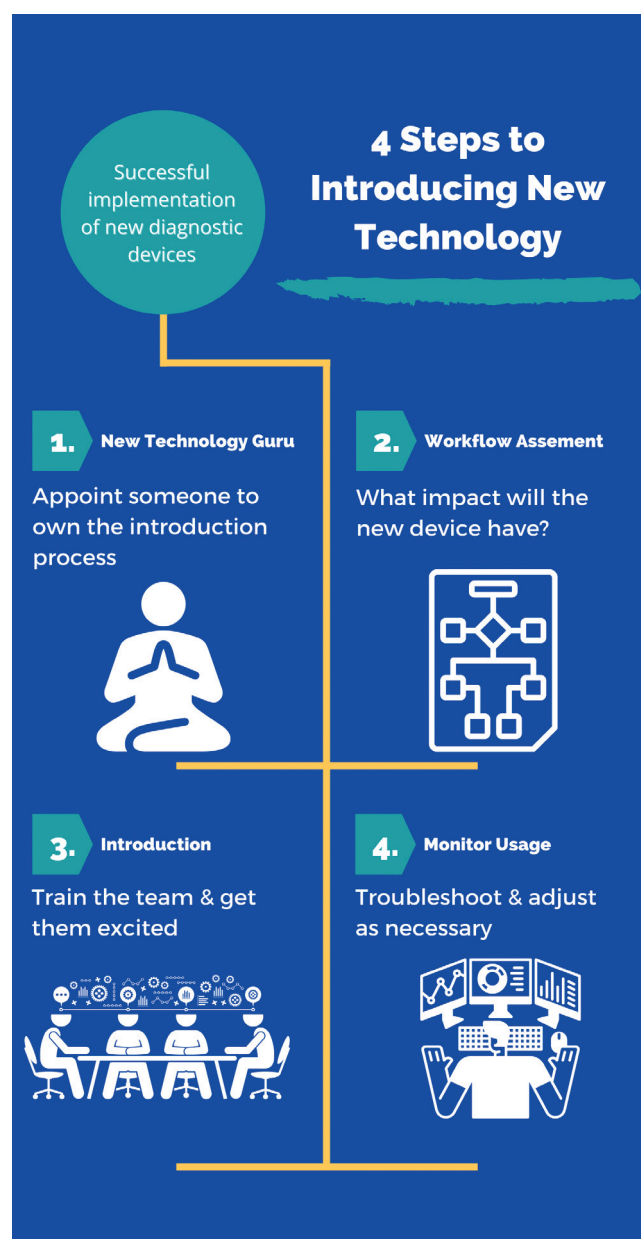
► **Step No. 1: Appoint a new technology lead.** This person should be a member of the team who is involved in the examination process. Avoid the temptation to appoint a senior member of the staff. Instead, look for someone who is enthusiastic about learning and likes new technology.

Ideally, when face-to-face meetings resume, bring your new technology leader along with you to conferences to learn alongside you and hear what you hear. Together, you can then share that information with the rest of the team.

► **Step No. 2: Determine what impact the new diagnostic test will have on your current patient workflow.** If you haven't yet mapped typical patient workflow at your practice, do so and share the information with your clinic team. Even better, time how long it takes for a patient to go through the process before ending up in the examination chair.

It is also wise to use a decision tree (Figure) to determine how great an impact the new technology is likely to have on your team and patient workflow. It also helps determine how best to adjust for this impact.

► **Step No. 3: Introduce the new technology to the team.** Plan a general introduction of the new technology at a staff



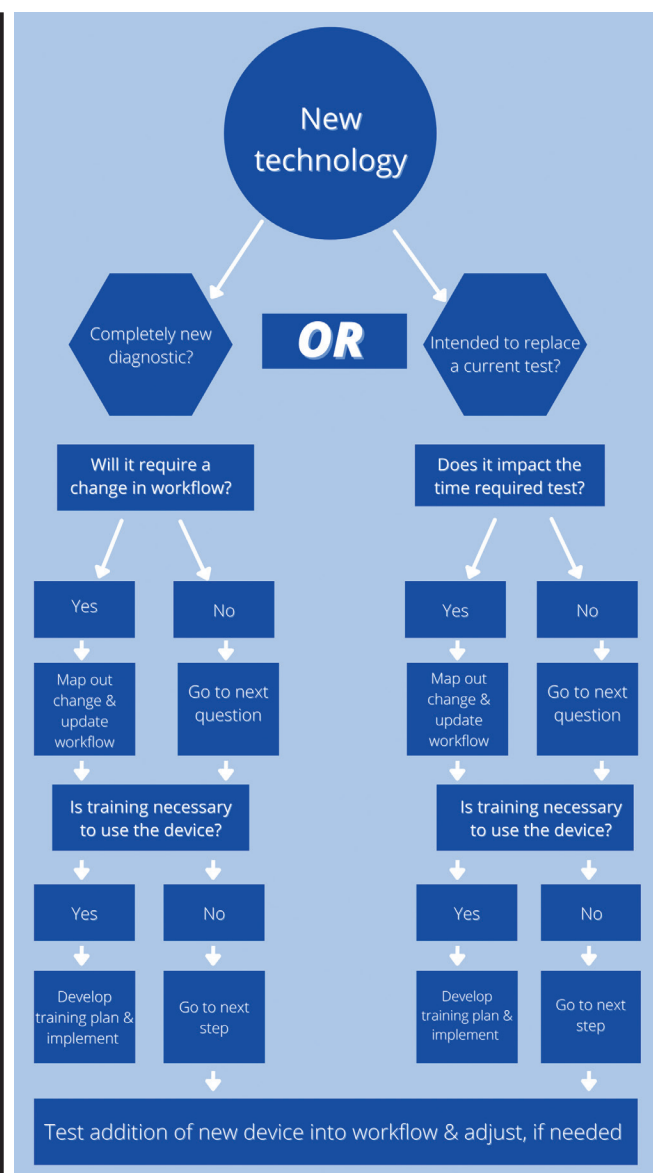


Figure. Decision tree for adding new technology to your clinic.

meeting, which should include a full training (didactic and hands-on) session with the manufacturer's representative

for the clinic team who will be using it. Explain to the team why you selected this device and how you believe it will benefit patient care.

Allow team members to take turns as a patient to test the use of the device and to experience the change in patient workflow. This will help establish how the device works and ensure that they understand what the results mean.

If this step is skipped, the result could be that staff members are too quick to abandon the use of the device. Years ago, I worked with several clinics that had incorporated a diagnostic test that proved to be widely disliked by clinic teams. Visits 6 months after the device's installation usually involved hunting through storage rooms to find it. The staff hid the device away because the results could not be compared to anything with which they were familiar and they concluded that the test did not work.

Another consideration in this step is patient buy-in. If the technology being implemented is a new diagnostic test for which you will be charging an additional fee, consider making educational material available to patients to help them understand the purpose of the test and why you recommend it.

► **Step No. 4: Monitor usage.** Task the new technology leader with monitoring if the new device is being used and troubleshooting problems the team is having with the device if they arise. If the device is not being used, the new technology leader should work to identify if the obstacle relates to training, workflow, or both and make adjustments as necessary.

CONCLUSION

The incorporation of new technology—particularly something brand spanking new—into your clinic should not be left to chance, particularly when it requires a significant financial investment for your clinic. Taking the time to establish a system for onboarding can help enlist your team's support and increase the likelihood of successful implementation and usage. ■

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