

Cardiology

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP

New York Cardiologists find that a Shared SPECT Solution Enhances their Practice

OFFICE

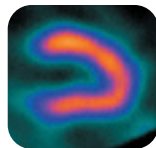
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OTHER SERVICES

Stress Echocardiography
Diagnostic Angiography

PHYSICIANS

Thomas F. Cunningham, M.D.
Mitchell A. Robbins, M.D.
Richard P. Stechel, M.D.



Three decades after its establishment, the independent cardiology practice operated by Richard P. Stechel, M.D., Thomas F. Cunningham, M.D., and Mitchell A. Robbins, M.D., is a leading provider of cardiology services in Great Neck, NY. While a mainstay of the practice has been echocardiography, that picture changed somewhat when the practice, a complete cardiology service, purchased a gamma camera in an effort to maintain its standing as a local leader.

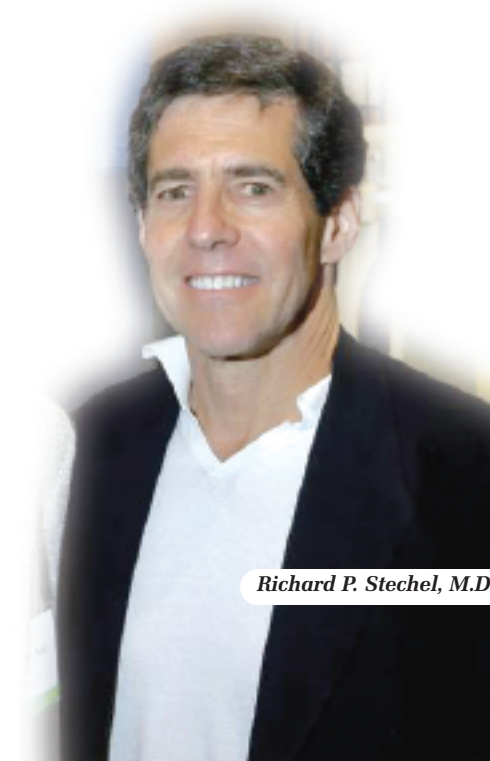
At the time, Dr. Stechel and his associates were performing nuclear work through the freestanding practice operated by a local nuclear radiologist. When the practice moved farther away, they decided to bring in their own camera. They haven't been disappointed. The three partners settled on Digirad's solid-state, upright Digirad® SPECT system, which they purchased together with The Heart Group, which houses the system in its own Great Neck cardiology office. Over the past four years, the purchase has been of great clinical benefit and a financially sound investment.

"Stress echos are great, and they can be very helpful, but nuclear SPECT perfusion stress testing is clearly a little more sensitive," said Dr. Stechel, whose practice installed the system in 2001 and now completes about three exams per day. "And, there are many patients whom you can't echo well for one reason or another. Perfusion stress testing is definitely better in those situations."

To Dr. Stechel, the benefits of owning a system are myriad:

- **Patients are more content having a physician they know complete their test. "For patients, it's nice to see a familiar face rather than going to another office and seeing people they don't know," Dr. Stechel said.**
- **Patients also are spared the inconvenience of having to undergo imaging at a hospital or off-site clinic.**
- **Physicians appreciate the continuity of ordering a SPECT test immediately following a patient's physical examination.**
- **Additional income is generated for the practice.**

"It's much easier for patients, and they have responded to the Digirad system very positively," Dr. Stechel said. "They go out front, book their tests, and that's it. It's really a one-stop situation for them."



Richard P. Stechel, M.D.

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From a clinical standpoint, the capability of caring for patients from the moment they enter the clinic on through diagnosis and treatment may be the single most important benefit. Both diagnosis and treatment have been expedited thanks to in-office imaging.

"I've always enjoyed caring for my patients from beginning to end, and I make judgments based on knowing my patients," Dr. Stechel said. "When I do a

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scan, I know what the patient did on a treadmill, and I know what his history was—if I set up a diagnostic angiogram I'm going to know what his coronary arteries look like, too. This gives me a total control over the patient's care."

Digirad SPECT systems are highly compact, open and upgradeable, making them attractive for in-office use. The availability of single, dual, and triple-head models makes it possible to match a system to an expected practice volume and easily upgrade to higher capacity models as the need arises. Digirad

SPECT cameras feature unique solid-state detector technology, enabling a number of significant clinical and operational performance advantages over traditional Anger-type cameras.

In selecting a gamma camera, Dr. Stechel and his colleagues sought a system that could fit into a tight space. When the group realized that the Digirad system could provide images comparable to larger, more expensive hospital-based systems, all the while offering a small footprint, their decision was made.

Since then, performance has boiled down to three things: improved patient care, a more complete continuum of care, and a stronger bottom line.

"The joy of being a complete cardiologist, doing every aspect of cardiology, and giving my patients the best possible care are very rewarding," Dr. Stechel said. "And, obviously, if you can do what you're trained to do and get paid for it, that makes more sense than giving away the income."

He added, "The pictures are exceptionally good, as good as those you get on a hospital-based system. We've been very pleased with the Cardius—and so have our patients."



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