

# Behind the Business: Dysphagia Mobile Imaging Inc.

Monday, June 16, 2008



WEBSITE: [www.DysphagiaMobileImaging.com](http://www.DysphagiaMobileImaging.com)

NUMBER OF YEARS OPEN: We were just incorporated in March 2008 as a spin-off of Jennifer's multi-disciplinary, pediatric speech, occupational and physical therapy practice – Therapeutic Interventions of Georgia, Inc. – which has been in operation since January of 2001.

WHAT YOUR BUSINESS DOES: Dysphagia Mobile Imaging, Inc. (DMI) is a professionally-owned, mobile, speech - language pathology clinic that provides Modified Barium Swallow Studies (MBSS) to assess a person's ability to eat and swallow food and liquids safely; in layman's terms we go to nursing homes with a mobile clinic, which includes a motion x-ray called a videofluoroscopy system, to assess patients who have swallowing disorders (Dysphagia). The patient is positioned within the x-ray so that the speech-language pathologist and the physician can view the patient's mouth, airway and esophagus while he/she swallows food and liquids mixed with barium. This is a non-invasive assessment and the only means for viewing the entire swallowing tube while eating and drinking. The results of the assessment provide the speech-language pathologist with the appropriate information to recommend a safe diet for the patient in order to prevent excessive coughing, choking, and recurrent pneumonias. By providing the MBSS on location at the nursing home, it allows continuity of care for the patients because the facility speech-language pathologist, the patient's family, and staff nurse can watch the assessment and contribute valuable information related to the patient's lifestyle. It also decreases unnecessary expenses and valuable time that are involved in transporting the patient to the hospital to receive the study. All of these factors, with certainty, improve the quality of life for the patient, which we feel is the ultimate goal of delivering healthcare services.

The CDC and other sources state that there are at least 15 million people in the US with some form of dysphagia and that only 1 million are diagnosed annually. Medicare spends \$670 million dollars on dysphagia related expenses every year. This is where we focus our business.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: We are starting off with three, a driver, physician and speech-language pathologist, but we plan to grow over the next 5 years to include 50+ employees and several mobile clinics throughout Georgia and South Carolina.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO THIS BUSINESS? Jennifer and I have both earned a doctorate in our respective fields, Speech-language Pathology and Health Administration, respectively; we are also both very entrepreneurial. Jennifer has been thinking about the great need for such a service in the Augusta area for over 10 years, but has been busy with growing and operating her pediatric practice. Although I have been extensively trained to run hospitals, my interests have always been with start-up healthcare technology ventures. Recently, Jennifer and I were married (Nov. 2007) and I moved to Augusta. While on our honeymoon in South America, we not only enjoyed our personal time together, we also spent time developing the concept of DMI and how to set it into motion.

STRANGEST CLIENT/INCIDENT: Since this is a start-up company, we don't have many client stories to tell yet. Check back with us in a year and I am sure we will have plenty to share.

WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT THE BUSINESS: As a quintessential entrepreneur, I love the process of learning about a new business, putting the plan together from scratch, developing the relationships with new clients, vendors, and employees, and in particular serving our customer who in our case happens to be some elderly people in great need of a service that they otherwise might not receive.

*"The DMI Mission is to fulfill the need for timely Dysphagia consultations with Modified Barium Swallow Studies that are mobile to where the patient is in residence, while providing personalized speech-language consultative care on an assessment-to-treatment continuum by utilizing state-of-the-art technology and highly qualified personnel."*

WHAT YOU DON'T LIKE ABOUT THE BUSINESS: Business consultants always say the owners should be focused "on" the business rather than working "in" the business; well, we like taking care of patients. If we could do that without worrying about how much Medicare will reduce our reimbursement, how long our invoices are going to take to get paid, and continually struggling with the workforce shortages in healthcare, we would be "happy campers."

WHY YOUR BUSINESS STANDS OUT: In presenting our services to prospective nursing home clients we have illustrated the increase in quality of patient care and the reduced costs of bringing the swallow studies to the patient, instead of sending them to the hospital. Yes, we will be much more convenient to the staff and we'll reduce costs for their administration, but more importantly we will be helping the staff provide higher quality patient care to their residents. By utilizing the latest in x-ray technology, having highly educated and trained speech-language pathologists and qualified physicians on board, our mobile clinics will be setting the standard for dysphagia assessment and treatment.

ORGANIZATIONS/EVENTS INVOLVED IN: Beyond all the professional and community associations we belong to, we are most proud of our affiliation with the Foundation for Therapeutic Options, a 501(c)3 organization. Jennifer created the foundation two years ago in order to raise money to pay for speech, language, occupational, and physical therapy for children who were not getting their needed care paid for through other sources. In October of last year we held our inaugural golf tournament at Champion's Retreat and rose over \$22,000 to provide therapy for children. We also gave away a Mercedes Benz to a hole-in-one-winner; so if anyone is interested in trying their skill this year please check out [www.TherapyOptions.org](http://www.TherapyOptions.org) and sign up for this year's tournament.

**YOUR BEST BUSINESS ADVICE:** Have the passion, but do your homework and prepare appropriately for success, thereby avoiding failure.

**WHERE YOU SEE YOUR BUSINESS IN 5 YEARS/10 YEARS:** Our plan calls for having 20 mobile clinics East and West from Augusta to Charleston and Atlanta. We have also started up the American Mobile Dysphagia Imaging Association (AMDIA) in order to help other professionals get started in this business in other parts of the country. We have created a national advisory board for DMI that will grow with professionally recognized experts in the field of Dysphagia which will establish national standards of care that will benefit us all sometime in our lives.

**MOST IMPORTANT BUSINESS PRINCIPLE:** Faith that we are put on earth to serve others; that we will be given the opportunity to be successful in serving others; and that when we recognize that opportunity, we execute on it

**BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN THE BUSINESS:** Our challenge right now is educating the physician that they can make a great contribution to their field by working with us to provide this service to patients.

In the hospital, the speech-language pathologist works with a radiation technologist or at times a radiologist, but in our clinical model we can work with any type of physician that wishes to maintain their clinical skills and learn more about how to help patients with quality-of-life issues.

We are looking for physicians licensed in Georgia and South Carolina to work with us and benefit from being a part of a new company that is on track to be a clinical and business success.

**ROLE MODELS/INSPIRATIONS:** Yes, I know we are newlyweds, but every day I find that Jennifer inspires me to succeed and provides me with a role model I can strive to emulate. I believe this comes from our mutual faith in our purpose for being.

**COMPANIES INTERESTED IN BEING BEHIND THE BUSINESS SHOULD CONTACT BUSINESS EDITOR DAMON CLINE AT [DAMON.CLINE@AUGUSTA CHRONICLE.COM](mailto:DAMON.CLINE@AUGUSTA_CHRONICLE.COM).**

*From the Monday, June 16, 2008 edition of the Augusta Chronicle*