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## **Renowned MRI Expert Alerts Public to New Concerns About Possibly Exposing Infants to Superbug Infections**

### **Infants Taped to Torn and Contaminated Pads When Undergoing MRI**

CHICAGO, IL--(Marketwire - December 2, 2008) - During the third day of the Radiologic Society of North America (RSNA 2008) conference, Chicago, IL, Dr. Peter Rothschild, one of the world's foremost MRI experts, is alerting the public to a common practice that endangers young immunosuppressed patients by exposing them to damaged pads and possible Superbug infections during MRI.

Peter Rothschild M.D. is considered one of the world's foremost MRI experts. He formerly served as Medical Director of the research laboratory at the University of California, San Francisco, where he helped develop the first commercially available Open MRI scanner. He is the editor of the first textbook on Open MRI and the author of the landmark paper "Preventing Infection in MRI: Best Practices for Infection Control in and Around MRI Suites."

Rothschild warns that a common procedure in hospitals and free standing MRI centers is to tape infants and young children directly to the MRI pads, to keep them from moving during their scans. Any movement during an MRI scan will degrade the resulting image, making it difficult or impossible to make the proper diagnosis. This is especially important for babies due to their already small size, thus the need for the best image resolution possible.

Additionally, MRIs are very loud, therefore if the babies are sedated, they must be deeply sedated/anesthetized and monitored constantly to make sure they do not stop breathing. The high magnetic fields in MRI make it difficult and dangerous to use much of the standard monitoring equipment. Recently a child was killed in an MRI, when an oxygen container was carried into the room, flew into the bore of the magnet and crushed him.

While taping infants eliminates the risks associated with sedation, Rothschild says the poor condition of the MRI pads makes this an extremely dangerous procedure by increasing the risk of infection from prolonged exposure to contaminated pads, especially for a premature infant without a fully developed immune system. MRI table pads often have tape and tape residue on the surface of the pads, which itself is an opportunistic breeding ground for bacteria and is difficult, if not impossible, to clean. Over time, pad surfaces become torn and frayed exposing the foam core, which is very porous and impossible to properly clean. Thus, the foam core is another excellent breeding ground for deadly Superbug bacteria.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have clear and unambiguous guidelines, stating that since it is impossible to adequately clean pads in this condition, they must be immediately replaced. It is estimated that 80-90% of MRI pads currently in use are torn and frayed; however few MRI centers perform routine inspections of the diagnostic pads to determine if they need to be replaced.

Rothschild says, "After seeing the pads with tape and tape residue from a well-known children's hospital, I realized that they were taping the babies, IV tubing and other material directly to the pads. I couldn't believe that someone with any infection control training would ever do such a thing when the MRI pads are in such an appalling condition. It is not a surprise that MRSA is spreading through hospitals and outpatient facilities. These babies can then spread this dangerous Superbug throughout the hospital from direct contact or through blankets and other material they come in contact with. I assert contaminated MRI pads are a threat to the entire hospital and must be replaced."

Dr. Rothschild adds, "If you visit <http://Superbug.smugmug.com>, you can see the actual pads that infants were taped to. You can clearly see the holes in the covering material where the underlying foam is exposed and discolored. The tape was not only used to hold the babies in place, but it was also used in a vain attempt to repair these pads. Obviously the technologists working at the hospital realized there was a problem, however for years the administration would not purchase new pads, even though the cost was minimal, less than the fee charged for two MRI exams. This is a common scenario I hear all the time."

Dr. Rothschild warns that infection control has had a very low priority at most MRI facilities for a variety of reasons. Infection control has been locked out of the MRI magnet rooms due to compelling safety concerns due to the magnetic fields. Budgets are tight and some MRI centers have been able to become accredited without an infection control policy and with torn and contaminated pads.

He further states that most often, inspectors do not even enter the MRI rooms, much less seriously look at the pads or ask for an infection control policy. Even if they would walk into the scan room, the pads would be covered with a clean sheet and unless they took the time to look underneath the sheet, they would simply pass the MRI center.

Many administrators and technologists know that accreditation agencies will not look closely inside the MRI suite. Combined with radiology administrators' limited knowledge of infection control and their position as decision makers to determine where and how to spend money and other resources, they therefore have simply ignored the problem instead of trying to fix it. The end result is the administrator's refusal to replace pads or bring in experts to develop an infection control policy for their imaging centers.

"I have never heard of an MRI facility failing accreditation because of torn and contaminated pads or lack of an infection control policy. However, even though as many as 80-90% of the pads in use today are torn and frayed and few, if any, MRI centers have an infection control policy, clearly none of the inspectors are looking in this critical area," says Rothschild.

"Unfortunately, accreditation does not mean that a MRI center is clean and safe," emphasized Richard Nolan M.D., a well known orthopedic surgeon with 25 years of experience with MRIs, who has been concerned for years over the lack of infection control at MRI facilities. "I have no idea how the Joint Commission or the American College of Radiology (ACR) can accredit any MRI facility that is in such clear violation of even the most basic infection control practices. Until they (Joint Commission and ACR) take seriously the threat of worn out contaminated table pads and lack of infection control procedures, this situation will only get worse."

Nolan advises, "They must immediately make every effort to thoroughly evaluate the pads and demand an infection control policy. Until then, it will remain up to the individual patients and referring doctors to determine if an MRI facility is clean and safe. I encourage any patient undergoing an MRI to examine the pads they are lying on, since I can assure you that if they are torn and frayed that the radiology department or hospital gives infection control a very low priority, if any such policies exist at all. The fact that the children's hospital Dr. Rothschild refers to passed a Joint Commission inspection while using these torn and contaminated pads clearly means that these inspectors are not going into the MRI suite and magnet room looking at the conditions of the pads."

Finally, Dr. Nolan adds, "The lack of infection control in the MRI suite can result in a threat to the entire hospital as well as the outpatient community."

In his recently released white paper published in July 2008, Rothschild called for more infectious disease control policies in the industry and patient education on how to prevent contracting a Superbug infection from their MRI scan. He also provides an 11-step checklist for radiology technologists that were developed with the help of the nation's top infection control experts.

To request a copy of Dr. Rothschild's white paper, titled "Preventing Infections in MRI: Best Practices for Infection Control in and around MRI Suites," contact Doug Kohl, Sierra Communications, (209) 586-5887, or [dkohl@mlode.com](mailto:dkohl@mlode.com). More information on Superbug infections in MRI can be found at [www.patientcomfortsystems.com](http://www.patientcomfortsystems.com)

About Peter Rothschild, MD

Dr. Peter Rothschild is considered one of the world's foremost MRI experts. He formerly served as Medical Director of the research laboratory at the University of

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California, San Francisco, where he helped develop the first commercially available Open MRI scanner. He is the editor of the first textbook on Open MRI, authored numerous papers on the subject and is a sought after speaker who lectures on MRI and its future. Dr. Rothschild is a Board Certified Radiologist and served as an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Radiology at the University of California at San Francisco. He earned his MD degree in 1981 from the University of Louisville, in Louisville, Kentucky. He is founder and president of Patient Comfort Systems, Inc., a company dedicated to patient comfort and safety.

#### Photography

To view photographs of the worn pads from a well-known children's hospital, visit <http://Superbug.smugmug.com>

The pictures show tape and tape residue on torn contaminated pads. The MRI facility was accredited by both American College of Radiology and the Joint Commission for hospital accreditation.

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Contact:  
Doug Kohl  
Sierra Communications  
(209) 586-5887  
[dkohl@mlode.com](mailto:dkohl@mlode.com)

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