

Landmark Study Leads To Concern Over The Safety And Cleanliness Of MRIs

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Peter Rothschild, M.D., renowned Radiologist and MRI expert, has released the ground-breaking paper, recently published on AuntMinnie.com, titled "Preventing Infection in MRI: Best Practices for Infection Control in and Around MRI Suites." This article expands on the issue that MRIs are often not being properly cleaned, thus leading to concern over Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) spread during radiological scans, in particular MRI.

MRSA was originally identified in 1961 and is now widespread throughout healthcare facilities, both hospital and outpatient settings. The most common source for transmission of MRSA is by direct or indirect contact with people who have MRSA infections or are asymptomatic carriers.

A major concern for imaging centers is that MRSA can be carried by asymptomatic patients. Worldwide, it is estimated that up to 53 million people are asymptomatic carriers of MRSA. Of these it is estimated that 2.5 million reside in the United States. Approximately 1% of the U.S. population is colonized with MRSA. Both infected and colonized patients contaminate their environment with the same relative frequency.

The morbidity and mortality of these bacteria is staggering. On average, hospitalizations for the treatment of MRSA versus other infections have a length of stay approximately three times longer and are three times more expensive. Additionally, the risk of death is three to five times greater for patients infected with MRSA versus methicillin sensitive Staph infections.

"Any patient lying on an imaging table could be a carrier capable of contaminating surfaces in the radiology suite," said Peter Rothschild, M.D., who is attempting to transform the MRI community's attitude concerning infection control. He adds "MRSA and other pathogens can live on and in common MRI table pads and positioners for periods as long as several months."

Patients need to ask questions when they go to a hospital or imaging center for an MRI scan. What are the cleaning procedures? How old are the pads? Do the imaging technologists wash their hands between every patient? How do technologists disinfect the MRI table and pads?

"At many MRI centers, there exists a false belief that merely placing a clean sheet over contaminated table pads, without actually cleaning them between patients, will somehow prevent the spread of infectious agents. What is most concerning is that very few MRI centers regularly clean their pads even once a day, much less between patients," Dr. Rothschild continued. "Additionally, almost all pad sets I have seen in use that are over a few years old are torn or frayed and should have been discarded long ago. It is disgusting to see the terrible conditions of some of the pads that patients come in close contact with in these MRI centers. Old, torn and frayed pads are impossible to properly clean and are a breeding ground for bacteria."

To combat this potentially lethal public healthcare issue, Dr. Rothschild has developed a technique for determining the safety of pads used in MRI. This technique involves using a magnifying glass to thoroughly examine all the seams for a tear or fraying and the use of a black light to check pads for biological contamination. However, few, if any, MRI centers have adopted these simple safety procedures.

Dr. Rothschild advises, "The best way I have found for patients to protect themselves is to ask to see the center's written infection control policies before their scans, and visit the center. If there are no written policies I can assure you that infection control has a low priority at that MRI center and I would look for another MRI center where infection control was taken seriously."

Educating the Public

To request a copy of Dr. Rothschild's white paper, entitled "Preventing Infections in MRI: Best practices for infection control in and around MRI," please contact Doug Kohl, Sierra Communications, (209) 586-5887, or dkohl@mlode.com.

About Peter Rothschild, M.D.

Dr. Peter Rothschild is considered one of the world's foremost Open 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, 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 M.D. 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.

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