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A WORLD REPORT

Customized Briefing for Roland Talanow

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## Leading the News

### Anomalous findings in CT simulations merit review by diagnostic radiologist, study suggests.

[AuntMinnie.com](#) (1/4, Pal) reported that when a radiation oncologist encounters "previously undetected findings during CT simulation," he or she should "ensure that those images are reviewed by a diagnostic radiologist, according to researchers from the Henry Ford Health System." The group based its conclusion on a recent study it conducted involving "CT simulation scan reports from 351 consecutive early breast cancer patients over a six-year period." Each of the patients "underwent a standard fluoroscopy simulation," and then "[f]ive-millimeter CT slices were obtained 20 cm above and below the isocenter with no intravenous contrast." The researchers then "determined the percentage of reports in which a previously undetected abnormality was reported on the planning CT," after which they "re-evaluated the prior and subsequent diagnostic CT exams to determine the relevance of these findings." Their report, which was unveiled at the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology meeting, showed that "15 percent of the patients had some form of newly detected abnormalities seen on CT simulation. Among these patients, 60 percent of the findings were deemed by the reviewing diagnostic radiologist to be potentially significant." Of the 31 patients who needed additional workup, "9 percent had clinically relevant findings." The researchers concluded that while "CT simulation images are not of the highest diagnostic quality, they can still yield clinically relevant information."

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## Clinical Practice

### Magnetic field may reduce post-injury swelling, research shows.

The [UPI](#) (1/5) reported that "a localized magnetic field can reduce swelling after an inflammatory injury," according to researchers from the University of Virginia. The team's findings, which were published in the *American Journal of Physiology*, show that "application of an acute, localized static magnetic field of moderate strength" works on swelling if it's "applied immediately after tissue trauma."

For the study, the researchers "applied inflammatory agents to the anesthetized hind paws of rats, simulating the conditions of a tissue injury," according to Virginia's [Daily Progress](#) (1/4, McNeill). "Then, under a microscope, they observed the paws' swelling decrease when they applied magnets to the injury." The group's findings "indicate that magnet therapy could be useful in treating everyday bumps, bruises and sprains." Thomas Skalak, professor and chairman of biomedical engineering at the university, envisioned "a time when magnetic devices could be applied to common injuries, much like ice packs."

[News-Medical.Net](#) (1/6) added that the magnets used in the study had a "70-milliTesla (mT) field strength," which is roughly "10 times the strength of the common refrigerator" magnet. The magnets appeared to cause blood vessels "that had been dilated" to constrict, while the "constricted vessels [became] dilated." The site noted, "Dilation of blood vessels is often a major cause of swelling at sites of trauma to soft tissues such as muscles or ligaments."

## Technology

### Radiology-specific Internet search engine developed.

[AuntMinnie.com](#) (1/4, Forrest) reported that a search engine devoted to radiology has been developed to aid radiologists in navigating the Internet in search of "radiology-specific and peer-reviewed content." The free site, [Radiology Search](#), was developed by Dr. Roland Talanow, a radiology resident at the Cleveland Clinic. He said the search engine "works similarly to other search engine[s], such as Yahoo and Google. A radiologist types in a word or phrase and the results are displayed." The difference, comes in "the heightened specificity of the results and the absence of unrelated, unwanted suggested sites," Talanow said. "Beginning a year ago, Talanow incorporated several specific search engines...with his own previously developed programs into one dedicated Web site for radiologists."

The site includes an "online tutorial" and provides "a menu for radiology journals." Another feature allows for customization, so that a radiologist can "search from his or her own website through a source code, which is adjusted to one's preferences through the home intranet site." Talanow's search tool debuted at the [Radiological Society of North America's](#) (RSNA) annual meeting in November, and as of mid-December, receives approximately 70 hits per day. Talanow added that he would like to "implement the search engine on the websites of radiological societies, such as RSNA."

## Research

### Pollution-based cancer risk declines in southern California.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (1/5, Wilson) reported that the cancer risk from Southern California's "air pollution has declined 17 percent over the last seven years but remains dangerously high across the region, particularly near ports and rail yards," as well as along truck-laden freeways, according to a study released by regional air regulators Friday.

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According to the [AP](#) (1/7), though, the decline is lower: 15 percent. The two-year study was conducted by researchers from the South Coast Air Quality Management District. The team "collected more than 18,000 air samples from ten sites," and the results revealed "a decrease in pollution related to some toxic cleaning solvents." But this finding "was tempered by the reality that the region still has some of the dirtiest air in the country."

According to California's [Orange County Register](#) (1/6, Brennan), roughly "1,200 people out of 1 million would be expected to contract cancer, on average, during a lifetime of exposure to the L.A. basin's air." Moreover, the researchers maintain that diesel exhaust may be "responsible for 84 percent of the total risk of cancer." But the state's air board is working to detoxify the air by championing legislation that may regulate diesel engines and other "mobile pollution sources."

## Practice Management

### Florida physicians lobby to increase patient fees for medical records.

The [AP](#) (1/7) reports that physicians "in Florida are asking the state to sharply hike the amount they can charge patients for copies of their medical records." Currently, health professionals can "charge a dollar per page for the first 25 pages and a quarter per page after that." But now, "they want a dollar a page regardless of the size."

They say that this increase would offset "their costs," which "are rising faster than their incomes," the [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#) (1/6, Lamendola) added. But the request "has brought protests from consumer advocates." They maintain that the "increase would hit hardest" those who are "already facing high medical costs: seniors and patients with complex diseases, chronic illnesses, disabilities, and mental illnesses, many of whom have thick files that get copied often, said Barbara DeVane, secretary of the Wellington-based Florida Alliance for Retired Americans."

## Quality and Safety

### FDA foresees no further isotope shortages.

In continuing coverage from previous briefings, [MedPage Today](#) (1/5, Smith) reported that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has declared the "shortage of medical imaging isotopes" to be "over." Additionally, the FDA stated that it does not anticipate any additional isotope-supply issues. Supplies of technetium-99m -- an "isotope used for such nuclear medicine procedures as sentinel node biopsies in cancer surgery, bone scans, and staging cancer patients" -- were scarce for much of December due to the extended closure of the "major source of [a key component of] radioactive isotopes for imaging purposes in North America." Canada's Chalk River nuclear reactor "was shut down Nov. 18 for routine maintenance," during which regulators found the facility lacked required safety improvements, leading them to extend the shutdown. Canada's government intervened and passed emergency legislation on Dec. 12 to re-open the facility "for 120 days, despite the safety concerns." The reactor produces molybdenum-99, which "is the precursor of technetium-99m." The isotope generators have a shelf life of roughly two weeks, and "are used to provide isotopes for about 14 million nuclear medicine procedures a year in the U.S."

### Illinois health officials testing people that flew with TB-infected passenger.

The [Chicago Tribune](#) (1/6, Mitchum) reported that officials from the Illinois Department of Public Health "have tested four Illinois residents for tuberculosis infection after they shared a December flight from India to Chicago with a woman who was sick with a drug-resistant strain of the disease." Department of Public Health spokesperson Melanie Arnold said that "[a]s of Friday afternoon,...four of the eight Illinois passengers had been

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checked via a chest X-ray or a skin test." She "declined to discuss the results." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is still "trying to contact 44 people from 17 [other] states [that shared the same flight] and advise them to be tested by local health departments."

## Newsmakers

### RSNA reports upswing in international attendance.

The [Chicago Tribune](#) (1/6, Bergen) reported that international participation at the [Radiological Society of North America's](#) annual meeting in November "drew about 7 percent more professional attendees from outside North America than it did in 2006," according to Steve Drew, the organization's assistant executive director for scientific assembly and informatics. The group's assembly at McCormick Place was described by the paper as one of "the city's biggest" conventions. These details were part of an article describing the impact of overseas tourism in the face of a weakening dollar on Chicago and the United States as a whole. In addressing the larger international turnout, Drew "cited increased educational offerings, but noted [that] the exchange rates didn't hurt either." The Tribune stated that overseas tourism has increased "by 10 percent nationwide and by 8 percent in Chicago for the first nine months of 2007 after a flat 2006."

### Osiris scores defense contract for radiation sickness drug.

On the front page of its Business section, the [Washington Post](#) (1/7, D1, Goldfarb) reports that biotechnology firm Osiris Therapeutics "won a contract from the Defense Department potentially worth \$224.7 million to develop the drug Prochymal to treat military personnel who are exposed to radiation from nuclear or radiological attacks." According to the firm's chief executive, C. Randal Mills, the Pentagon's approval of the contract last week will "help facilitate the company's efforts to aim the treatment at a variety of diseases." The drug, which is administered intravenously, is currently "in late-stage human trials to treat graft-versus-host disease, a severe inflammatory condition afflicting some leukemia victims who reject bone marrow transplants," as well as "a more common though less severe condition, Crohn's disease." The drug is "in an earlier stage of testing for [the] treatment of Type 1 diabetes." Osiris "expects to apply for Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for treatment of graft-versus-host by the end of the year and within the next 18 months for radiation treatment."

According to [Bloomberg](#) (1/5, Waters, Jinks), Osiris competed for the defense contract with Cleveland Biolabs, whose stock "dropped \$4.69, or 59 percent, to \$3.31" on news of the deal. By contrast, stock in Osiris "rose \$1.29, or 10 percent, to \$13.86," making it the firm's "biggest one-day gain" since November. According to Cleveland Biolabs' CEO Michael Fonstein, the loss of the contract will not prevent the firm from seeking "U.S. regulatory approval" for its drug, Protectan, by 2009. He argued that Protectan "is superior as it has demonstrated survival benefits, protects the gastrointestinal tract, is stable, lasts longer and is easily administered." Also covering the story was the [Baltimore Business Journal](#) (1/4, Terry).

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