

# Side discrepancy errors in radiology reports rare but often clinically significant

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Side discrepancy errors in radiology reports do occur and it is important that radiologists, referring physicians and patients communicate well to help prevent errors in clinical management, according to a study performed at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA. "Side discrepancy errors refer to instances when the side of the lesion is incorrectly noted in one or more sections of the radiology report," said Minal Jagtiani Sangwaiya, MD, lead author of the study.

The study included more than one million radiology reports. "88 side discrepancy errors were reported and 80% of those errors were rated as clinically important. The errors in mislabeling the side of the lesion were almost twice as frequent in female patients as in males. [Mammography](#) and radiography, followed by [MRI](#) and ultrasound were the most commonly reported techniques with mislabeling of the side of the lesion in identified errors," said Dr. J. Sangwaiya. The errors noted in the study included those that had been corrected. The study does not account for unrecognized errors.

"While the incidence of side discrepancy errors is very small, most reports describing [medical errors](#) are self-reports or surveys and they almost certainly underestimate the incidence, perhaps by a factor of 20 or more," she said.

"Radiologists should check for side discrepancy errors and physicians should correlate the laterality of the radiological lesions with clinical complaints and images as well. Patients should also discuss their

radiology findings with their physicians, especially in light of their presenting symptoms and clinical signs," said Dr. J. Sangwaiya.

More information: This study appears in the May issue of the *American Journal of Roentgenology*.

Source: American Roentgen Ray Society

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