

# Breast CA diagnostic errors major cause of malpractice suits

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(HealthDay)—The most common reason for medical malpractice suits against radiologists in the United States is diagnostic errors, particularly breast cancer and non-vertebral and spinal fractures, according to research published in the February issue of *Radiology*.

Jeremy S. Whang, M.D., of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-New Jersey Medical School in Newark, and colleagues used medical malpractice data for 8,401 radiologists in 47 states to determine the most frequent causes of malpractice suits.

Thirty-one percent of radiologists had a least one claim made over the course of their career and a cause could be derived for 4,043 of the

4,793 cases (84 percent). The researchers found that [diagnostic errors](#) were the most common reason for medical malpractice suits (14.83 claims per 1,000 person-years). Breast cancer, non-[spinal fractures](#), spinal fractures, lung cancer, and vascular disease were the most frequently missed diagnoses. Procedural complications (1.76 claims per 1,000 person-years) and inadequate communication with either the patient or referrer (0.40 and 0.71 claims per 1,000 person-years, respectively) were the next most frequent causes of medical malpractice suits against radiologists. Failing to recommend additional testing was a rare cause (0.41 claims per 1,000 person-years).

"Our data then indicate that interpretive errors, rather than communication errors, are by far the most common generic cause of malpractice suits against radiologists," the authors write. "In this category, [breast cancer](#) is the most frequently missed diagnosis, followed by non-[vertebral fractures](#) and spinal fractures."

One author disclosed [financial ties](#) to One Call Medical.

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