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We Are Not Alone

S. Mirbagheri, K. Yousem and D.M. Yousem

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We Are Not Alone

 S. Mirbagheri, K. Yousem, and  D.M. Yousem

While numerous recent US studies indicate a decline in medical malpractice suits across many medical specialties in the past decade, medicolegal concerns facing radiologists have conversely increased.¹⁻⁴ A 2013 report on diagnostic radiologists indicated that 30.9% (2600 of 8401) of all US radiologists have been sued.⁴ A subsequent 2014 study of neuroradiologists found that 449/904 (49.7%) American Society of Neuroradiology members had been sued, and of these, nearly 50% were sued multiple times.³ The level of concern over malpractice suits was reported as moderate in severity by practicing neuroradiologists in the United States, and most respondents, despite substantial contradictory evidence on the outcomes of malpractice trials favoring defendants, thought that the medicolegal system was weighted against them.³ We are scared.

Have we exported malpractice suits as readily as we have exported Kentucky Fried Chicken and Subway outlets across the globe? With the exception of the European Union, few countries outside the United States report malpractice lawsuit rates. We, therefore, created an informal survey, which was sent via e-mail to 96 neuroradiologists worldwide, representing 49 countries, to gain a sense of whether the American experience and anxiety over being sued are unique or universal. The survey results were sent to 60 officers of those national radiology society boards to confirm the data.

The data from this informal survey are presented in the Table.

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The following are the 8 countries with the highest rates of radiologic malpractice suits, shown with average radiologist salaries and annual malpractice premium rates (presented respectively in parentheses):

- United States, government and private (46%, \$340,000, \$21,000)³
- Italy, government (50%, \$300,000, \$3000)
- Ireland, government (35%, \$235,000, \$8000)
- Germany, government and private (30%, \$300,000, \$1670)
- Spain, government (10%, \$65,000, \$550)
- Sweden, government (10%, \$130,000, \$550)
- Saudi Arabia, government (10%, \$300,000, \$8500)
- Chile, government (10%, \$120,000, \$1000).

The responses generally revealed a moderate level of concern about malpractice that is a global phenomenon. The impact on our collective practice of medicine varies from mild to moderate across countries. As to Americans' fear of malpractice lawyers, WE ARE NOT ALONE.

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Survey research data collected

Country	Average Radiologist Salary	Radiologist/Practice Pays for Insurance	Average Insurance Premium	Radiology Malpractice Rate	Representative Radiologist Sued for Malpractice	Fear of Being Sued ^a	Practices Defensive Medicine ^a	Malpractice Affects Practice ^a
Africa								
Egypt	\$50,000	No	Null	5%	No	3	4	2
Americas								
Argentina	\$37,000	Yes	\$1200	5%	Yes	1	2	2
Brazil	\$130,000	Yes	\$560	1%	No	1	1	2
Canada	\$300,000	No	\$3000	5%	Yes	2	2	2
Chile	\$120,000	Yes	\$1000	10%	Yes	3	3	4
Guatemala	\$35,000	No	Null	1%	No	1	1	1
United States	\$340,000	Yes	\$21,000	46%	No	4	4	Null
Asia								
Indonesia	\$60,000	Yes	\$300	0%	Yes	5	5	4
Japan	\$100,000	Yes	\$70	1%	Yes	2	4	4
Malaysia	\$190,000	Yes	\$8400	0%	No	2	2	2
Philippines	\$21,000	No	Null	2%	No	2	1	2
Singapore	\$200,000	Yes	\$1750	5%	Yes	3	3	3
South Korea	\$200,000	Yes	\$5000	3%	Yes	2	1	2
Sri Lanka	\$12,000	No	Null	0%	No	2	3	2
Taiwan	\$120,000	Yes	\$600	3%	Yes	4	4	4
Australia/Oceania								
Australia	\$450,000	Yes	\$5000	5%	No	2	2	2
New Zealand	\$240,000	Yes	\$1300	0.1%	No	2	2	2
Europe								
Belgium	\$300,000	No	Null	1%	No	3	3	3
Bosnia/Herzegovina	\$17,000	No	Null	2%	No	3	2	2
Croatia	\$25,000	No	Null	2%	Null	2	3	2
Cyprus	\$84,000	Yes	Null	5%	Yes	2	2	3
Denmark	\$100,000	No	Null	10%	Yes	2	2	1
Finland	\$100,000	No	Null	1%	No	1	2	2
France	\$180,000	Yes	\$1360	5%	Yes	3	5	4
Germany	\$300,000	Yes	\$1670	30%	Yes	2	3	2
Greece	\$30,000	No	\$750	1%	No	2	3	2
Ireland	\$235,000	Yes	\$8000	35%	No	4	3	4
Italy	\$300,000	Yes	\$3000	50%	Yes	3	3	4
Lithuania	\$14,000	No	Null	3%	No	3	4	4
The Netherlands	\$165,000	No	Null	1%	No	2	1	2
Norway	\$200,000	Yes	\$70	1%	Yes	1	1	1
Portugal	\$150,000	Yes	\$2000	1%	Yes	2	3	3
Spain	\$65,000	Yes	\$550	10%	Yes	2	2	3
Sweden	\$130,000	No	\$550	10%	Yes	2	2	1
Turkey	\$40,000	Yes	\$300	3%	No	3	3.2	3.4
United Kingdom	\$175,000	Yes	\$1700	2%	No	2	2	2
Middle East								
Iran	\$36,000	Yes	\$400	4%	Yes	4	4	3
Iraq	\$19,200	No	Null	0%	Yes	3	4	5
Israel	\$12,000	Yes	\$330	2%	No	2	2	2
Lebanon	\$120,000	Yes	\$200	1%	Yes	4	4	3
Saudi Arabia	\$300,000	Yes	\$8500	10%	Yes	5	4	3

Note:—Null indicates no response/not applicable.

^a1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always.