Media Contact:
Keri Couples
(952) 595-1496
keri.couples@vrad.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Over 60% of Radiologists Read With the Lights On?

vRad Debunks This and Other Radiology Inaccuracies Found in Online Search Images – With a Bit of Humor

Stethoscopes and Magnifying Glasses NOT Required for Diagnostic Accuracy

MINNEAPOLIS, MN — (December 1, 2014) If you did an online search for "radiologist" on Google or Bing, you would inaccurately deduce from the images found that radiologists:

- Read images with high-intensity fluorescent lights or even high ambient or natural light;
- Interpret x-rays while wearing stethoscopes and/or surgical masks;
- Use magnifying glasses to review images;
- Interpret images that are backwards or upside down; and
- Review mostly analog images (e.g., non-digital film using lightboxes vs. digital PACS); as few as 34% of radiologists read using digital technology according to the images on Google Search.

In fact, more than 90% of hospitals use digital interpretation technology such as picture archiving and communication systems (PACS).

vRad (Virtual Radiologic), the nation's largest telemedicine company and radiology practice with over 500 physicians, analyzed the top 100 images for the keyword "radiologist" from Google and Bing and compared the results to publically available radiology benchmarks in order to determine appropriateness based on:

- Representation (Physician, Technologist, Other)
- Gender (Male/Female)
- Minority Status (Yes/No)
- Viewing Technology (Digital-PACS/Analog-Lightbox/Natural Light)
- Modality Mix (XR/CT/MR/Other)
- Room Light Status (On/Off)
- Stethoscope Status (Wearing/Not Wearing)
- Image Appropriateness (Yes/No)

According to the white paper, "Radiologists Read With the Lights On: Searching for Insight, a Visual Analytics Study of Radiology Imagery in the Media" (download it here), only 13% of the top 100 images on each search engine show radiologists doing their jobs accurately as radiology is practiced in the United States. Along with the white paper, vRad developed a short video to illustrate misperceptions of radiologists based on inaccurate search engine images—as humorously seen through the eyes of a child.

Nearly 77% of U.S. adults begin their online health related research using a search engine such as Google and Bing.[i] These two search engines account for 86% of U.S. monthly search volume, with Google accounting for 12 billion searches alone;[ii] the keyword "radiologist" accounts for approximately 400,000 unique searches annually on Google.[iii]

"Radiology is oftentimes referred to as the 'invisible specialty,' yet radiologists account for almost 9% of all physicians in the U.S.,"[iv] said David Trachtenberg, Chief Solutions Officer for vRad. "Research shows that even patients who have had imaging exams know little about the profession. One study concluded that only 54% of patients who had a CT scan knew that their radiologist was actually a medical doctor.[v] We wanted to see if this lack of 'visibility' and understanding was reflected and reinforced in search engines since they are one of the first places people go for health-related information and research. We were startled by the number of inaccuracies depicted in the images of radiologists – especially related to the actual use of innovative digital technology."

From the analysis that vRad conducted, online images in Google and Bing understate how much radiology is an innovation-driven specialty. Current images help perpetuate inaccurate perceptions of radiologists and downplay the importance that radiology contributes to patient care, considering that nearly half of all Emergency Room visits involve a radiological exam (e.g., x-ray, ultrasound, CT or MRI scan).[vi] Furthermore, such digital and technical innovations have led to improved diagnostic accuracy, reduced length-of-stay in hospitals and advances in teleradiology, advanced analytics and improved patient access to subspecialty radiology.

Other findings of note include the following:

- 30% of the top 100 images on Google and Bing show radiologists wearing stethoscopes – even while reading. As a doctor's doctor – with little patient contact – this clearly misrepresents the reality of radiology, especially when considering teleradiology. The percentage of images depicting radiologists wearing stethoscopes is abnormally high even when considering interventional radiologists, who account for less than 10% of the specialty.[vii]
- Over 60% of Google images show radiologists reading with the "lights on," defined as the use of fluorescent, direct sunlight or non-ambient lighting in the reading area. The majority of reading room environments found on search engines depicts lighting environments associated with a decreased quality of interpretations, which could negatively affect patient care.

"Clearly the online imagery of radiologists does not accurately represent the state of the specialty in the United States, and, in fact, has a surplus of images associated with negative impacts on the quality of patient care," Mr. Trachtenberg concluded. "Our study and video were designed simply to bring attention to this issue – with a bit of humor. At a minimum, the visibility of the 'invisible' specialty can be improved to reflect the serious contributions radiology continues to make as a driver of high quality patient care."

Click to tweet: X-Rays Contagious? Rads Use Stethoscopes & Read w/Lights On? @vRad Debunks Inaccuracies http://bit.ly/11VtkgJ #Radiology #DebunkingTheMyths

About vRad's Radiologists

vRad's radiologists do not read with the lights on – at least when they're interpreting diagnostic images. All of them read using patented digital technology, by definition, and typically abstain from wearing stethoscopes, at least in the privacy of their home offices. Training for the proper use of magnifying glasses is not part of the vRad onboarding process.

On the other hand, they do attend leading medical schools and universities, are all U.S. board certified or eligible and have an average of 9+ years of post-certification experience. Our radiologists are also required to pass a rigorous clinical test prior to hiring; only 61% of candidates pass.

Since January 2009, 98% of vRad's new hires are subspecialists. Our radiologists have an average of over 18 state licenses and 100+ facility credentials to read the annual 7 million+ studies for vRad's over 2,000 hospitals, health systems and radiology group clients.

About vRad

vRad (Virtual Radiologic) is a global telemedicine company and the nation's largest radiology practice with over 500 physicians. vRad's physicians and operational platform serve 2,000+ hospitals, reading over 7 million patient radiology reports annually. vRad is also a leader in healthcare informatics: its RPC^{SM} (Radiology Patient Care) Indices are the first findings-based national and peer group benchmarking metrics for the use of radiology imaging. Our analytics platform includes over 28 million imaging studies, growing at 600,000 per month. vRad's clinical expertise and evidence-based insight help clients make better decisions for the health of their patients and their practices. For more information about the Company, including vRad's 2014 Frost & Sullivan Best Practices Award, please visit www.vrad.com. For real-time updates, follow us on Twitter (@vRad), or "like" us on Facebook.

# # #

[i] http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/health-fact-sheet/.
[ii] https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Market-Rankings/comScore-Releases-September-2014-US-Search-Engine-Rankings.
[iii] Google Analytics.
[iv] The Henry K. Kaiser Family Foundation, Physicians by Specialty Area, http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/physicians-by-specialty-area/ (September 2014).
[v] http://www.fiercemedicalimaging.com/story/radiologists-cant-afford-be-invisible-patients/2012-12-01.
[vi] National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey: 2010 Emergency Department Summary Tables.
[vii] Department of Radiology, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, https://www.radiology.wisc.edu/sections/interventional/, (2014).