



*Fearful lot  
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radiologists.*

# If I can't see you, you aren't really there

C. Douglas Phillips, MD, FACR

*"People tend to pay attention to the guy who shouts and ignore the one who whispers."*

—Kelly Moran

Wow, that quote has another few meanings now, eh? Here we go...

The radiology reading room is an unusual place. Sure, I can accept that most physicians and almost all nurses loathe and despise venturing into radiology. It's like we have the cooties or something. They seem to fear they will catch what we have. Or, maybe that they will be irradiated, exposed, made a part of a science experiment, or potentially see something that will change their lives.

Fearful lot we are, we radiologists. The reading rooms are seemingly the most frightening: Dark and quiet, dictations under way, and our soft, often murmuring speech that PowerScribe has to deal with as a constant backdrop, light from the PACS making our faces glow as we peruse images.

In an academic center, add the constant discussion of cases as the trainees check out studies. Everywhere, people are on the phone. We're busy. We are taking care of patients. So, as someone enters the reading room, we MAY or MAY NOT be aware of them. So, here's what happens. People who

enter on occasion seemingly feel the reverence of the room, remain quiet or only whisper, and expect to be acknowledged and helped. However, and this is a big truth, WE DON'T SEE THEM. They wait quietly, getting upset that no one is helping them. Kind of like walking into Starbucks and not getting your latte fired up.

OK, here's the bad news to all of you who have done this. I do **NOT** have eyes in the back of my head. And, I tend to really focus on the exams I'm looking at. Feel free to speak. Tap me on the shoulder (be careful with that, though. I may jump out of my chair). Push up forward to the PACS monitors. Because, sorry to say, otherwise I may not see you. In fact, it is **LIKELY** I won't see you. I'm not ignoring you. I'm working. Maybe if I had a sharp object in my hands and could cut myself if interrupted you'd better understand. Note to self: Start reading out loud while carrying a machete.

Why people (frequently) get upset about my inability to see behind myself is a mystery. They can't do it, either. I'll bet you can't. So, the only people that get immediate attention are the loud and insistent. And, you know how we all hate those folks.

Keep doing that good work. Mahalo.

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