

Tel Aviv - Will New MRI System End Autopsies in Israel?

Published on: August 30th, 2011 at 01:56 PM



Tel Aviv - Autopsies, long a problematic and divisive issue for many religious Jews, could become a thing of the past in Israel. A new MRI device that can accurately determine cause of death without autopsies was inaugurated Tuesday afternoon at Assaf Harofeh Hospital.

The systems are in use in several places abroad, and allows doctors to conduct a “virtual autopsy,” viewing the inside of the body and observing the condition of organs and other internal components without the need to cut open the body. The systems have been around for several years, but recent technological improvements make the scans far more accurate than they were in the past – to the extent that many doctors feel that they can rely on the results produce by the MRI.

Participating in the ceremony, among others, were Deputy Health Minister Ya'akov Litzman, Deputy Finance Minister Yitachak Cohen, and Zaka chairman Yehuda Meshi-Zahav. Litzman said that the installation of the MRI was a historic event, because it provided a technological solution to one of the most divisive issues in Israeli life – the insistence of police and medical authorities on conducting autopsies in cases where the cause of death is not clear, and the resistance by religious – and specifically Hareidi – communities to autopsies,

resistance that in the past has resulted in large-scale demonstrations and protests, arrests, and even the removal of bodies from the Pathological Institute in Tel Aviv.

You can view this article online at VosIzNeias.com/90411

Copyright © 1999 - 2008 VosIzNeias.com - All rights reserved.

Read Comments (8) — [Post Yours »](#)

2

Yesterday at 02:39 PM Anonymous Says:

[Report as Inappropriate](#)

As most of you have probably realized, this technology will be useful in only a limited number of cases and will NOT eliminate the need for physical autopsies in a large percentage of cases where toxicology studies on tissue samples and closer examination of organs is necessary. Its a great step forward even if it eliminates a few autopsies each year but Litzman, as usual, is over his head on the details.

[Reply »](#)

3

Yesterday at 02:53 PM enlightened-yid Says:

[Report as Inappropriate](#)

No technology or MRI machine can ever replace the quality and accuracy of traditional hands-on autopsies that have been performed for hundreds of years. It takes 13 years post grad school to become a qualified medical examiner. These machines will only erode the skills of pathologists and miss proper identification of causes of deaths. The MRI autopsies were first studied and adopted by the U.S. military because they wanted to quickly process the high volume of combat casualties. Their pathologists quickly discovered that accuracy was not the same as traditional autopsies. But accuracy was not needed as the military has different standards for medical examination. Sending a letter to the family saying your son died in in a shootout or IED attack was satisfactory.

Some Israeli medical schools have also adopted "virtual pathology" training for their med students because finding cadavers is hard and expensive there. But many medical professionals agree that students come out with less knowledge and experience that way.

[Reply »](#)

4

Yesterday at 03:36 PM Anonymous Says:

[Report as Inappropriate](#)

Did you ever think that we here in New York don't have to go through this and a few phone calls from askonim will get you out quickly but there in "yiddishe mdinah" they have to fight nail and tooth almost every time.

[Reply »](#)

5

Yesterday at 04:44 PM Anonymous Says:

[Report as Inappropriate](#)

Reply to #3 [Show Quote](#)

i beg to professionally disagree with you.

having been witness to the virtual autopsies on many occasions here in the USA

its actually more accurate then conventional autopsies as most conventional autopsies are localized at the point of entry or trauma many times not giving you a full picture of the actual cause of death where is the VA=virtual autopsy is comprehensive going from head to toe. Their is protocal that was developed including x-rays,cat scans and MRI in most cases cod=cause of death are pinpointed exactly.

whats stopping it to be used is the cost factor. it cost 7times as much to do a va as opposed to the old fashioned invasive way which is kenege halacho bizu hamess

the virtual on the oth hand isnt invasive body is left intact and in many cases no need for any fluids to be removed

as far as the us military is concerned it has invited the orthodox jewish religious view to be presented to them by those involved and was impressed and understood the concerns which btw the moslems (lehavdil) have as well re medical students this would help many kohanim to become DRS as you pointed out part of the schooling is done on cadavers

[Reply »](#)

6

Yesterday at 05:04 PM clear-thinker Says:

[Report as Inappropriate](#)

Reply to #4 [Show Quote](#)

Only sometimes. The only time one needs an autopsy in New York is when there is a question on the cause of death. Is it a homicide or not. No virtual machine will allow a medical examiner to compare bullets to a gun without autopsy.

[Reply »](#)

7

Yesterday at 06:45 PM awacs Says:

[Report as Inappropriate](#)

Reply to #6 [Show Quote](#)

I would imagine (speaking from ignorance here) that halacha would not mind overmuch the removal of a foreign substance (such as a bullet) from the body, which you'd assume could be done without removing tissues, etc.

[Reply »](#)

8

Yesterday at 09:00 PM clear-thinker Says:

[Report as Inappropriate](#)

Reply to #7 [Show Quote](#)

I agree. However, I have prosecuted cases where a defendant was charged with homicide after hitting a person in the head with a baseball bat causing a subdural hematoma. Cases where a stab wound, and the direction of the wound have been of the utmost importance.

[Reply »](#)