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Observers observed: ethnographic analysis of a radiologist at work

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Objectives: The main objective is to study strategies of embodied cognition and the intersubjective ground for individual intentions in the process of image-based diagnosis.

Methods: The article is based on research conducted at the actual radiology department (USA). Two complementary research methods, namely ethnography and phenomenology, were used in order to reveal the essential regularities and sedimentations of diagnostic practices as performed by radiologist and the everyday background of certain scientific-cognitive operations. The method of research includes enactive proofs- observations and analysis of the usage of radiologist's professional memory through the skillful coping with medical imaging technology.

Results: The article presents a range of both descriptions and analyses of concrete operations performed by radiologists during their daily professional routine. This data shows how the embodied diagnostic cognition based on medical imaging is structured.

Conclusions: Radiologists' professional routine oscillates between individual enactive cognition and social, professional and even institutional responsibility. This means that there is some embodied inter subjective ground for interpretation and communication of diagnostic images even before the visual search and empirical transmission of information occurs. Through, the prism of intersubjective embodied cognition, it is possible to raise new theoretically and socially important questions concerning, for example, how something new enters into experience and/or praxis, or how an experienced radiologist shifts from epistemological authority (static representations, inference) to practical authority (embodied habituality). Finally, it is argued that even one's status or position within a professional field has its cognitive and social aspects.

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