

## news

## Polarized Xenon Gas May Aid Diagnosis of Lung Disease

A University of New Hampshire (UNH) physics professor has commercialized a technology for polarizing xenon gas, which could help magnetic resonance imaging to better see inside the lungs, the UNH announced recently. When inhaled by patients, polarized xenon allows MRI to produce a clear picture of the lungs' interior, which cannot be seen with conventional techniques. It could benefit millions who suffer from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, the fourth leading cause of death in the United States, by allowing doctors to see which parts of the lungs are affected.

The research has been funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health. Professor Bill Hersman has launched a company called Xemed to commercialize the technology. Hersman has secured FDA approval to test polarized xenon with MRI in humans. The testing is scheduled for later this year with Sam Patz, a collaborator at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. "The pressure is on now," said Hersman. "The world has been waiting long enough for a diagnostic procedure for lung health, so we're scrambling to provide that." Computerized physician order entry systems (CPOEs) are designed to improve patient safety by reducing clerical errors, but a new study shows such systems can facilitate a whole new set of errors.

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