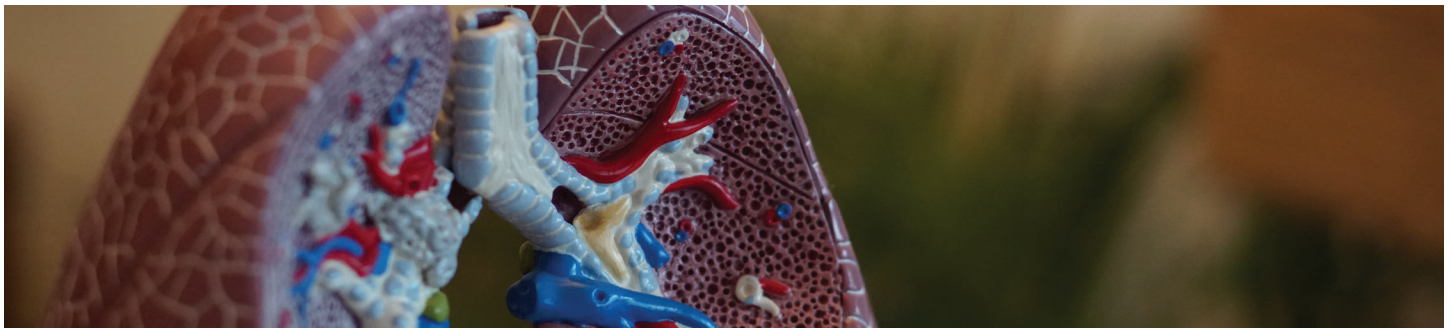


Learning Series - #4



Making sense of medical terminology - LUNG IMAGING



Fibrosis

A lung disease that occurs when lung tissue becomes damaged and scarred. This thickened, stiff tissue makes it more difficult for the lungs to work properly. As pulmonary fibrosis worsens, progressive shortness of breath is experienced.

Atelectasis

Collapse of part of the lung tissue, either by being compressed by the outside or if an airway to the lung is obstructed. Compression can be caused by pleural effusion and pneumothorax. Obstruction can be caused by lung cancer, causing the entire lung to collapse due to lack of inhaled air. Certain atelectasis patterns can appear like consolidation or fibrosis on lung imaging.

Consolidation (or Infiltrate)

Can show up in the lungs as a density that resembles fluffy clouds. When alveoli fill up with fluids it manifests on a chest x-ray as consolidation. The five kinds of fluids that can cause this include blood, water, pus, cancer cells or protein.

Pleural Effusion And Pleurisy

Pleural effusion: An excess of fluid in the pleural cavity, the potential space in between the lungs and the chest wall.

Pleurisy: Inflammation of the membrane encasing the lungs.

Focal/Diffuse/Patchy

Used to describe a process in the lung.

Focal: Think local. A specific area of interest - a solitary shadow on the lung.

Diffuse: Think widespread. It's expansive. A diffuse atelectasis.

Patchy: Not diffuse nor focal - it appears in several "clumps." Patchy infiltrate.

Density or Opacity

This refers to the area on the x-ray that is brighter than expected. When x-rays are absorbed or blocked by something, a chest x-ray will show these bright spots. The thick pus and mucus from pneumonia can appear brighter. A budding cancer can appear as a density. Opacity and density can be used by radiologists interchangeably and can represent a variety of lung pathologies.

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