



Aviation Security Group Pitches Airport Medical Interventions: VisualDx software can speed diagnoses



The National Safe Skies Alliance, a group of organizations interested in aviation security, is promoting a plan under which the Transportation Security Administration and the Centers for Disease Control would work cooperatively at U.S. airports to spot arriving passengers with abnormally high body temperatures that could be a symptom of a severe illness, such as avian flu, and might warrant immediate medical attention.

Under such a plan, which is still at the embryonic stage, according to John Quackenboss, a

representative of the Safe Skies Alliance, TSA officials would deploy infrared heat-detecting portals installed in airport screening areas to identify passengers exhibiting abnormally high body temperatures. Such passengers could be diverted to CDC medical personnel at the airport who would observe their symptoms and quickly make preliminary diagnoses.

The pace at which such diagnoses could be made might be accelerated with the use of a diagnostic software tool known as "VisualDx," which catalogs a wide variety of diseases and medical conditions, lists their likely symptoms, presents color photographs of their appearance and recommends appropriate remedial steps the medical personnel could take.

The VisualDx software, which is offered by Logical Images, Inc., of Rochester, NY, is already being used in 45 hospitals in Pennsylvania, 30 medical facilities in New York City and 25 facilities in Mississippi, said Quackenboss, who also serves as director of federal, state and municipal programs for Logical Images.

The U.S. Army has purchased 1,000 licenses to enable its personnel to use the diagnostic software.

Representatives of the Safe Skies Alliance have expressed their concerns to TSA and the CDC about severely ill airline passengers showing up at U.S. airports, said Quackenboss.

“We’ve always been worried about a medical situation at an airport,” he explained.

TSA and CDC officials are studying the concept of medical identifications and interventions at U.S. airports, particularly as a preventative measure to deal with potential pandemics, such as avian flu, he added.

Federal officials are considering a pilot study of the heat-detecting portals and the visual diagnostic software tool, which might take place at the Alliance’s laboratory located at the airport at Knoxville, TN. If such a pilot were successful, the procedures could be expanded to the 19 other U.S. airports where the CDC maintains medical facilities, said Quackenboss.

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