

Nuclear scan pioneer at UNL

By Lise Olsen
Senior Reporter

Paul Lauterbur can see through human bodies. He can find tumors without performing operations and test blood without making any one bleed.

And so can anyone else who uses the technology Lauterbur adapted almost 15 years ago.

Lauterbur will speak about his research, which has become a useful tool for both physicians and researchers, and describe new technology that he's developing at a special awards program at 3:30 p.m. Friday, 104 Hamilton Hall.

Lauterbur was the first to apply nuclear magnetic resonance to scan the human body.

Unlike X-rays or cat-scanning techniques, NMR does not use radiation. The procedure, which takes from 15 minutes to one hour, is harmless and painless — except for claustrophobic people.

NMR uses a strong magnetic field, created by an extra large soup-can shaped magnet. The magnet aligns randomly spinning atom nuclei in the human body. Later, radio waves are used to tip the nuclei. When the waves quit, the nuclei move back to their original positions. A computer records the position and reconstructs three dimensional images—clearer than X-rays—of body parts or functions.

Currently about 500 NMR image devices are



Lauterbur

used in hospitals nationwide, Lauterbur said. At a cost of about \$1 million each, they're not selling like hotcakes.

Yet slowly and conservatively the machines are making their way into the labs and hospitals throughout the country, Lauterbur said. Some say his techniques are revolutionizing medicine.

Attack proves need for wisdom

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Official Washington seems to have little appreciation of this. When it is not busy celebrating a military victory over a sandbox nation ruled by a kook in a doorman's uniform, it is thinking of ways to compound the problem by showing contempt for history. House and Senate Republicans, led by Majority Leader Robert J. Dole, have introduced legislation that would give the president an even freer hand to respond to terrorist attacks. In an unintended assessment of their own worth, these Republicans would no longer require the president to consult with Congress before sending U.S. troops into a hostile situation.

But if the strike against Libya proves anything, it is how much the president ought to consult with Congress. With every day, the second-guessers are looking better and wiser.

If ever there was a time to ensure the maximum participation of people with wisdom, experience and a different point of view, it is now. Instead, some members of Congress can hardly wait to give the president carte blanche and some journalists seem to equate reflection and dissent with cowardice and virtual treason.

War is ugly and the celebration of it nearly as ugly. The raid on Libya may have been necessary but it is hardly a cause for celebration, a reason to ignore history, or a rationale for squelching criticism. The United States did what it thought it had to do — just as it did in 1975 when 41 U.S. servicemen died attempting to rescue 39 captured seamen who may have been already freed. That incident should serve as a reminder.

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Cohen writes an editorial column for the Washington Post.

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