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New Wand Detects Surgical Instruments Left In Patients

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By [Catherine D. Bertram](#)

According to an [article](#) in the Chicago Tribune, a company called [RF Surgical Systems](#) of Bellevue, Wash., created the RF Surgical Detection System which is essentially a scanning wand that can be used by surgeons to find any tagged items remaining in a patient. Tags (or seeds) about the size of a rice grain are imbedded in gauze, sponges and the like. One wave of the wand over the patient will reveal if the coast is clear.

According to an article in the New England Journal of Medicine, retained objects were reported "1 in 8,801 to 1 in 18,760 inpatient operations" which essentially is the equivalent of one case or more each year for a large hospital. Unfortunately, this study was based on malpractice claims not just reported events, so some experts say those numbers are most likely an underestimate.

Does it work? According to the [article](#), more than 100 hospitals are using the system at a cost of about \$15 per surgery.

Our firm has extensive experience with local cases involving surgical errors, including local hospitals where retained objects caused patient death. If you have any questions about this type of case feel free to [email me](#) at cbertram@reganfirm.com or call me at 202-822-1875.