

Incidental Finding Levels

Level 1 - No medically significant findings (normal or normal variant findings). No medical follow up needed. This includes research subjects older than 60 years with atrophy and chronic microvascular ischemic changes (e.g. periventricular white matter, basal ganglia or pons).

Level 2 = Class B IF (minor findings) The subject should discuss the medical significance of these findings with their physician, but no specific time frame is recommended. No immediate medical attention is needed.

Level 3 = Class A-2 IF (abnormal findings) Expedited medical evaluation within two weeks is recommended for further evaluation of these findings.

Level 4 = Class A-1 IF (acute abnormal findings) Immediate medical evaluation needed today (e.g. emergency room)

EXAMPLES:

A Level 2 or Class B IF is not necessarily immediately life threatening or severe, but is likely to be deemed by a subject to be important to his/her health. Examples from brain imaging include acute sinusitis (with air/fluid levels) or mastoiditis, non-specific patchy white lesions in subjects less than 60 years of age, chronic infarct, chronic trauma, tonsillar ectopia, severe generalized-atrophy, focal atrophy (e.g., isolated brainstem and/or cerebellum), small meningioma (<3cm) without edema or cranial nerve or brain involvement, and possible demyelinating disease (non-enhancing). Examples from abdominal imaging include non-obstructing cholelithiasis or urolithiasis.

A Level 3 or Class A-2 IF is of more medical significance and requires expedited clinical evaluation (e.g. within 2 weeks). Examples from brain imaging include aneurysm, other vascular malformation (e.g., cavernous or AVM), mass or infiltrating lesion with minimal edema or mass effect (e.g., glioma, small possible metastases), and possible acute demyelinating or inflammatory (e.g., Lyme) disease with enhancement. Examples from abdominal imaging include renal, liver, pancreatic or pelvic mass lesions, aortic aneurysm, cholelithiasis or urolithiasis with biliary or ureteral obstruction, uterine or ectopic pregnancy, and spinal mass lesions. Examples from chest imaging include pneumonia, atelectasis, airway compression, cardiomegaly, aortic aneurysm, and spinal mass lesions. This class of IF's is of most concern because these serious conditions may not be clinically apparent or may be associated with vague or confusing symptoms.

A Level 4 or Class A-1 IF is one that reveals a condition that is likely to be life-threatening or severe and that requires immediate (emergency room) or expedited clinical evaluation. Examples from brain imaging include acute infarct, acute hemorrhage (e.g., SAH, SDH, hematoma), mass with prominent edema or brain compression (intra or extra axial), and acute hydrocephalus. Examples from abdominal imaging include intraperitoneal free air, acute appendicitis, diverticulitis, cholecystitis, pancreatitis, bowel ischemia or perforation, and severe bowel obstruction. Examples from chest imaging include pneumothorax or hemothorax, aortic dissection, or pulmonary embolus.