

# Introduction: The Diagnostic Difficulty of Pulmonary Embolism

Pulmonary Embolism (PE) is currently listed as the third highest cause of death in hospitalised patients in the USA. A national survey published back in 1975, as summarised in the diagram below adapted from that survey, is still being quoted in support of the need to take care in ensuring the correct diagnosis is made. It is generally agreed that a clinical differential diagnosis is only accurate in about 60+% of cases, underlining the critical importance of a high quality, rapid, safe and easily performed screening test.

This booklet, written by experts in the field, is designed to analyse in detail the various options for screening patients for PE, and putting the case for choosing ventilation/perfusion (V/Q) SPECT diagnostic imaging, specifically using the ventilation agent Technegas as the best possible test for your patients. Although this technique did not exist at the time of the survey, and no doubt the safety of anti-coagulation therapy will have improved over the years, a careful study of the diagram that highlights the consequences of a wrong diagnosis is still very meaningful today.

## The Natural History of Pulmonary Embolism

*Adapted from: Dalen JE, Alpert JS. Prog. Cardiovasc. Dis. 17: 259-269, 1975*

