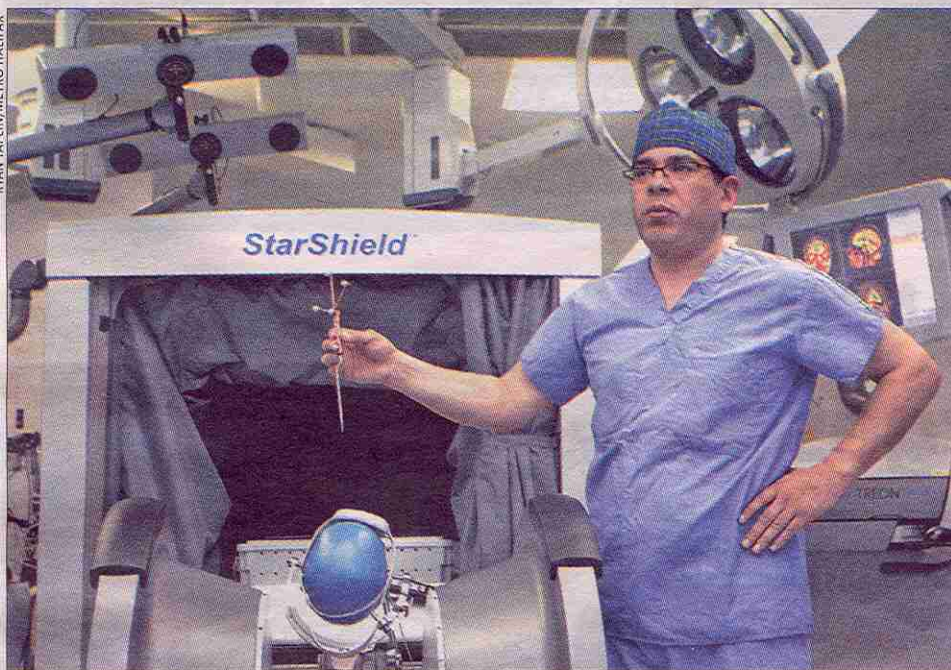


RYAN TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX



Ivar Mendez, head of neurosurgery at the QEII, gives a demonstration of the new intra-operative Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine at the hospital yesterday.

QEII MRI surgery a Canadian first

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When they pulled a brain tumour out through his nose, Bradley Hamm was hardly aware he was making Canadian medical history.

The 49-year-old from Chester Basin was the first patient to be operated on using the QEII's latest technological advancement: An intra-operative Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine. It's the first of its kind in the country and it was installed in an operating room at the QEII in late October.

"I wasn't really aware at the time how much of a big event it was," Hamm said of his Nov. 25 surgery. "Afterwards, I was made aware I was the first in Canada to have this done, and it was amazing."

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Bradley Hamm

The MRI uses a magnet that's one-tenth of the strength of a regular MRI, so surgeons can use it in the operating room. It provides surgeons with real-time images during neurological procedures.

Ivar Mendez, head of neurosurgery, said surgeons use it as a road map. It's so advanced that it makes Halifax the best city in the country to have neurosurgery. Already, patients have flown in to have their surgeries done here, he said.

For patients like Hamm, it means less invasive surger-

ies and faster recovery times. And patients once considered too high-risk may now be candidates for surgery.

The new \$3.5-million gadget was unveiled to the public at a news conference yesterday. It was funded by the QEII Foundation, Capital District Health Authority and the manufacturer, Medtronic Inc.

It will be a one-of-a-kind training tool for medical students, and Mendez said it will attract and retain some of the best minds in the region.

The hospital's reputation is the reason Halifax was picked instead of Toronto, he added.

"We have a track record on neuroimaging in terms of the rest of Canada."

It's been used in six surgeries so far. Mendez said eventually it will be used daily.