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What's New in the Patient Safety World

November 2025

MRI Hazards – Big and Small

Adverse events in the MRI suite have often been related to big things – hospital beds, wheelchair, oxygen cylinders, and others. But sometimes, small things have led to issues – magnetic eyelashes, hair extensions, face masks with metallic fibers, etc.

Last July, another big item was involved in a fatal MRI accident. A 61-year old man who was pulled into an MRI machine after he walked into the room wearing a large weight-training chain around his neck died the following day (AP News 2025). Now, 3 months later, detailed analysis of the incident is still lacking. Apparently, his wife, who was undergoing a knee MRI, asked for her husband to help her get off the table. It's not clear if the MRI technician summoned the man into the room or how he was allowed to enter the room without screening. At any rate, he was wearing a 20-pound chain that he uses for weight training, and the magnet pulled him to the machine, pinning him.

Though published details are scant, there is actually a video of the incident on Instagram. It shows the man entering the MRI room, approaching the machine, turning to grab his wife's wheelchair, and then being sucked to the MRI machine where it looks like he is being choked by the metal chain around his neck. His body went limp, and it is not clear how long he was trapped (some reports said he remained attached to the machine "for almost an hour before they could release the chain from the machine") and when or if the magnet was turned off. He was eventually taken to a hospital and died the following day.

And, then, there are the small items – again related to cosmetics (Lou 2025). A new trend using ferromagnetic nail polish has led to streak artifacts on 3T MRI interfering with scan interpretation. One example is the "cat eye" manicure -- a pattern achieved by nail technicians swiping a magnet over the magnetic particles in the nail polish. Metallic hair dye may also cause minor distortions on MR images. The article also mentions permanent eyeliner that has ferromagnetic material and many tattoos containing iron oxide as causing not only MRI artifacts but also occasionally causing burns.

The list of items that need to be screened for prior to MRI scanning keeps getting longer. It's doubtful that a Ferroguard or similar magnetic detection system would alarm for these very small ferromagnetic materials. But such systems should undoubtedly alarm if

someone wearing a 20-lb. metal chain around his neck tries to enter Zone IV (the magnet room).

Some of our prior columns on patient safety issues related to MRI:

- February 19, 2008 "MRI Safety"
- March 17, 2009 "More on MRI Safety"
- October 2008 "Preventing Infection in MRI"
- March 2009 "Risk of Burns during MRI Scans from Transdermal Drug Patches"
- January 25, 2011 "Procedural Sedation in Children"
- February 1, 2011 "MRI Safety Audit"
- October 25, 2011 "Renewed Focus on MRI Safety"
- August 2012 "Newest MRI Hazard: Ingested Magnets"
- October 22, 2013 "How Safe Is Your Radiology Suite?"
- October 21, 2014 "The Fire Department and Your Hospital"
- August 25, 2015 "Checklist for Intrahospital Transport"
- August 2016 "Guideline Update for Pediatric Sedation"
- October 2016 "MRI Safety: There's an App for That!"
- January 17, 2017 "Pediatric MRI Safety"
- August 8, 2017 "Sedation for Pediatric MRI Rising"
- March 2018 "MRI Death a Reminder of Dangers"
- March 2018 "Cardiac Devices Safe During MRI But Spinners!?"
- November 2018 "OMG! Not My iPhone!"
- April 2, 2019 "Unexpected Events During MRI"
- September 2019 "New MRI Hazard: Magnetic Eyelashes"
- October 15, 2019 "Lots More on MRI Safety"
- November 5, 2019 "A Near-Fatal MRI Incident"
- November 2019 "ECRI Institute's Top 10 Health Technology Hazards for 2020"
- January 7, 2020 "Even More Concerns About MRI Safety"
- March 2020 "Airway Emergencies in the MRI Suite"
- October 2020 "New Warnings on Implants and MRI"
- January 2021 "New MRI Risk: Face Masks"
- June 1, 2021 "Stronger Magnets, More MRI Safety Concerns"
- November 2021 "Yet Another Risk During MRI"
- January 2022 "MRI Safety Issues"
- July 26, 2022 "More Risks in the Radiology Suite"
- October 24, 2012 "Serious MRI Accident at Unregulated MRI Center"
- November 21, 2023 "Another Terrifying MRI Accident"
- January 2024 "Guns and MRI Don't Mix"
- February 20, 2024 "What is a "Safety Case"?"
- June 11, 2024 "Nursing in the MRI Suite"
- August 13, 2024 "Preventing Thermal Injury During MRI"
- October 2024 "Another MRI Accident Reveals Gap in Oversight
- October 2024 "MRI Special Patient Considerations"
- October 8, 2024 "First Responders and MRI"

- April 22, 2025 "Updated ACR Manual on MRI Safety"
- May 2025 "Add Another Item to Your MRI Screening Protocols"

References:

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