

# Upright MRI of Cherry Hill

## Unparalleled accuracy and comfort without the tube.

By Glori Gayster

For many, the idea of undergoing Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is daunting. To others, the highly effective diagnostic procedure feels simply impossible. Due to feelings of claustrophobia, many patients are extremely reluctant to enter long, narrow tube used for a traditional MRI, despite the importance of such imagery in healing a health-related condition.

But there is an option right here in South Jersey that can bring topnotch imaging to people who previously avoided such procedures.

Upright MRI of Cherry Hill is a full-service MRI facility that has been providing high-quality, accurate studies for patients throughout the region for more than five years'. Led by G. Tom Morea, MD, a board-certified radiologist with more than 25 years experience, the dedicated and skilled team performs routine MRI and MRA studies plus unique positional imaging with utmost attention to detail and patient care—and all the while, patients are able to watch TV.

An MRI is primarily used for neurological, musculoskeletal, cardiovascular and oncological studies, as it provides great detail and contrast of a body's internal structure and functioning. While non-invasive, the traditional MRI uses a tunnel-like scanner, and to say it is confining would be an understatement.

"What many don't realize is that even an open MRI does not necessarily address a patient's anxiety," Dr. Morea notes. "Other open MRIs may not be a cylindrical tube but patients do have a piece of equipment directly and closely in front of them. Those who suffer from claustrophobia still experience the same sense of fear of confinement."

At Upright MRI of Cherry Hill, Dr. Morea and his team uses the Fonar Upright MRI at 0.6 Tesla. This scanner is more powerful than many other open MRIs and yields results that rival those of traditional scan-

ners. Whether it is a routine MRI or a positioning study, the tests average 20 to 30 minutes, and most reports are provided to referring physicians within 24 to 48 hours. The upright technology also does not cost more than other MRI alternatives.

Even patients who are not claustrophobic can benefit from this state of the art technology. The Fonar Upright MRI is able to accurately scan individuals weighing up to 500 pounds, who previously were unable to have imaging studies completed with accuracy, not to mention comfort. In addition, Upright MRI of Cherry Hill treats patients of all ages.

"We've performed studies on children as young as five years old, and did so as a youngster sat on his mother's lap," Morea says. "Yes, the ability to watch TV helps, too. As kids return to school and sports are in play, it is great for parents to know their options."

### It's all about positioning

At Upright MRI of Cherry Hill, Dr. Morea's team specializes in the use of Positional Imaging, which can often identify issues not captured by a routine MRI. Upright technology is extremely effective in the diagnosis and treatment planning for spinal conditions with its positioning capabilities. Likewise, the tool is a great alternative when scanning a patient's head, abdomen, legs and arms.

Positional Imaging is the process of scanning patients in weight-bearing positions. Depending on a patient's condition, referring physicians may request studies with the patient sitting, standing, bending, lying down or in a combination of positions. This provides an even greater ability to visualize and properly diagnose the related issue in the most individualized manner.

"For example, I have seen spinal images of a patient lying down that shows normal alignment," Morea explains. "However, when standing and bearing their body's weight, a clear instability in

the spine was reflected in the upright MRI image. Similar cases of undiagnosed issues have been shown in patients' knees. The ability to scan in weight bearing and alternative—bending then straightening—positions is so important."

Test preparation is similar to that of most MRIs. Patients should dress comfortably and avoid wearing anything metallic. All jewelry, hairpins and glasses will need to be removed. There are no dietary restrictions or instructions, so patients should take any medications and can maintain their normal eating schedules.

While the proof is in the picture, it also comes from the patients.

"I came to Upright Imaging because of my fear of having an MRI done in the 'tube' type MRI," says one recent patient. "The staff at Upright MRI is very caring and kind. They understand the concerns that patients have regarding the procedure for an MRI."

**Upright MRI of Cherry Hill is located at 701 Route 38 East on the corner of Longwood Avenue in Cherry Hill. The office offers flexible hours starting at 8 a.m. Monday through Saturday with evening hours during the week. They also accept most insurance coverage. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (856) 486-9000 or visit [UprightMRIofCherryHill.com](http://UprightMRIofCherryHill.com).**



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# Internal Affairs

Wary of that MRI tunnel? Advances in imaging technology are taking the pain out of the diagnostic process.

BY DANIELLE BURROWS

**M**artha Crawford sleeps upright in a chair every night.

She suffers from retroperitoneal fibrosis, a rare condition that forms excess tissue in her abdomen, shooting pain through her spine any time she lies down—including when she undergoes the crucial, semiannual Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) that shows how the disorder is affecting her organs. A traditional MRI requires that a patient lay still for an average of around 40 minutes.

"I can't do it. I can't lie on my back long enough for an MRI to get the images," Crawford says.

A year ago, the Burlington resident was riffling desperately through the phone book for options when she came across Upright MRI of Cherry Hill, which administers scans in a sitting or standing position. "I told my doctor, 'I want to go there,'" Crawford says.

At the facility, an open MRI system positions patients between two massive magnets for the duration of the scan. As is the case with traditional MRIs, patients must remain as still as possible, but a 42-inch wall-mounted television helps pass the time.

The ability to capture images of our bones, organs and tissue is a cornerstone of modern medicine, and the variety of radiological techniques has grown exponentially

in recent decades. Among the most valuable tools is the MRI, an extremely detailed scan useful in diagnosing cancer, neurological issues and cardiovascular problems. Yet, adding patient comfort to the mix has been a relatively new phenomenon.

After all, the traditional MRI still takes place inside a narrow tube that, for many, causes anxiety and claustrophobia.

For patients who are overweight or obese, fitting inside these compact spaces is uncomfortable and may not even be possible; such patients have typically been relegated to open MRIs, which utilize lower magnetic field strengths and, therefore, offer diminished accuracy.

With the advent of more advanced machinery, though, there's the option of avoiding and minimizing the restrictive conditions associated with the procedure. "Our machine has been very successful in alleviating claustrophobia and in comfortably accommodating larger patients," says Dr. William Muhr of South Jersey Radiology Associates. The practice's 3-Tesla Open Bore Verio, while still requiring that patients enter a tube, has a shorter tunnel and larger circumference than previous generations of machines. The Verio's tunnel is almost 2.3 feet in diameter, and its ultra-high magnetic field allows



for shorter scan times, without sacrificing accuracy. For many procedures, a patient's head can extend outside of the opening.

Upright MRI machines offer a lower magnetic field, and there are other benefits to using this version of the machine, according to Dr. G. Tom Morea, chief radiologist at Upright MRI of Cherry Hill.

"When a patient lies down for a traditional MRI, the spine's alignment changes, and often the cause of the ailment is no longer apparent," Morea explains. "By sitting or standing in a weight-bearing position during an upright MRI, we capture the problem as it exists. For spine and back imaging, the upright option is the most advantageous."

Another unconventional option is a horizontal open MRI, like the Hitachi Iris Elite machine used at Larchmont Imaging. Rather than entering a tube, patients lie beneath a magnet while the space on either side of them remains wide open.

"Open MRI scanners are a great option for larger or claustrophobic patients," says Dr. Andrew Zeiberg of Larchmont.

Now, part of the challenge is getting the word out.

Martha Crawford's primary-care physician was previously unaware of the availability of vertical MRIs, something Morea encounters frequently. "Many physicians either don't know about us, or continue to send their patients to traditional imaging centers out of habit," Morea says.

Even though such systems can benefit many patients, it's essential that patients communicate with their physician about the tradeoffs. Open MRIs may be more comfortable, Zeiberg notes, "however, they can't perform some of the more complex MRI exams such as breast MRI, cardiac MRI and some complex angioplasty exams."

It's a case-by-case decision, as Fred and Theresa Carbone of Moorestown learned, after surviving a car crash. Fred was thrilled when his physician gave him the go-ahead to have an open MRI, but Theresa, who sustained greater injuries, wasn't a candidate for open imaging.

"She's a tough lady, but I still felt badly that she had to go into the tunnel," Fred Carbone says. "For me, though, the open MRI was terrific, and much more comfortable than the closed MRIs." ■

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