

Through the Mask and Into the MRI Machine

A shared experience in the brain cancer life of blogger Adam Hayden

March 31, 2025 By [Adam Hayden](#)

Hey, before we get started

The tech to my right stops sliding the table into the MRI machine and locks eyes with me through the lattice of the immobilization mask. He's surprised that I stopped him.

Was the scan ordered with contrast?

Yeah, I think so. I mean, I'm pretty sure it was.

Do you need to place an IV for that?

Oh yeah! I mean, yes. We can do that now. Cool tattoos, by the way. Why a brain?

Well, I have brain cancer. Sort of why I'm here today, and after my surgery, I got this brain with the scalpel.

Oh cool. Makes sense. The tech to my left asks, "And why a heart over here, then?"

You know, if you have the brain, you should probably have the heart, too. What should I get next, a spleen?

Anyway, it's really cool.

Er. The tattoos I mean. Definitely not the brain cancer. The tattoo is cool. Not the cancer. Definitely not the cancer.

All good, man.

Still locking eyes with him through the mask.

He's probably 22 or 23. He's a handsome kid. Brown eyes. He's handling this all pretty well for a patient who's had 50 scans and moves around the radiology suite like it's his buddy's living room.

Yeah, so let's get started with the IV. He glances at the tech to my left, across the table where I lay. They look at each other like one of them would shout, "Not it!" The other tech is probably around the same age, and she had just helped me tie the back of my hospital gown because one of the strings that wraps from the back to tie at the front of the gown was missing.

Second time this month.

My dignity takes a hit when a stranger ties up the gown at my neck that could use a block and a shave at the bottom of my hairline. Whitney helps me feel a little less insecure when she tells me, from her 17 years in medicine, that "You're just another body. We just see bodies all day.

He pulls the short straw and swabs my right arm with alcohol for the IV placement.

Hey, that wasn't bad at all. Good job, brother, that was a good stick!

I'm coaching him along. I feel like a talking cadaver.

Well, I should probably draw back some blood before I pat myself on the back.

I can taste the saline now. I think we're good, man!

Okay, right on!

I think he's not sure if this is appropriate to show some pride. I want to give him a fist bump.

So yeah, you'll need to lay as still as possible. Well, you know that. You've had like a hundred of these. But lay really still. You said this was for like surgery or something? We have protocols for that I should probably check... Treatment planning of some kind?

Radiation planning.

Right, right. The order had something about thin slices. On the scan, like the images, the brain slices are supposed to be really thin. It's on the order. But I think that's how we usually do it, so we should be good.

He drops into the earphones like a walkie-talkie: Hey, I'm going to give you that contrast now.

He pulls me out of the machine and says, "Hey! This line looks pretty good!" as he presses the plunger on the syringe to administer the contrast.

I'm so happy this wasn't a perfusion scan, I think to myself, the needle is way bigger, and the perfusion has to be pushed with increased pressure for the imaging to work right.

At the end of the scan he slides out the table and tells me, "You did awesome! I don't think you moved at all! I got some great pictures.

Belly breathing, brother.

Well, you're bleeding some, so make sure you wait a while to let this clot up before removing the wrap.

The tech to my left walks me to the changing room. "Do I need to untie the back of your gown?"

Nah, I'm sure I've got it.

You sure?

Okay, you can.

Goddamn dignity.

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