

Bobby Singh puts MRI to the test

Offensive lineman demonstrates technology at official opening

by **Matthew Hoekstra**

Staff Reporter

When you're six foot three and 315 pounds, it's a safe bet the world isn't designed for your comfort.

Shirts are too small, cars are too cramped and beds are too short. But veteran football offensive lineman Bobby Singh discovered new life-saving imaging equipment at Richmond Hospital is the perfect fit.

"It was very nice. You don't feel as claustrophobic. All in all I'd give it an A+," said Singh, emerging from the hospital's new donut-shaped magnetic resonance imaging machine.

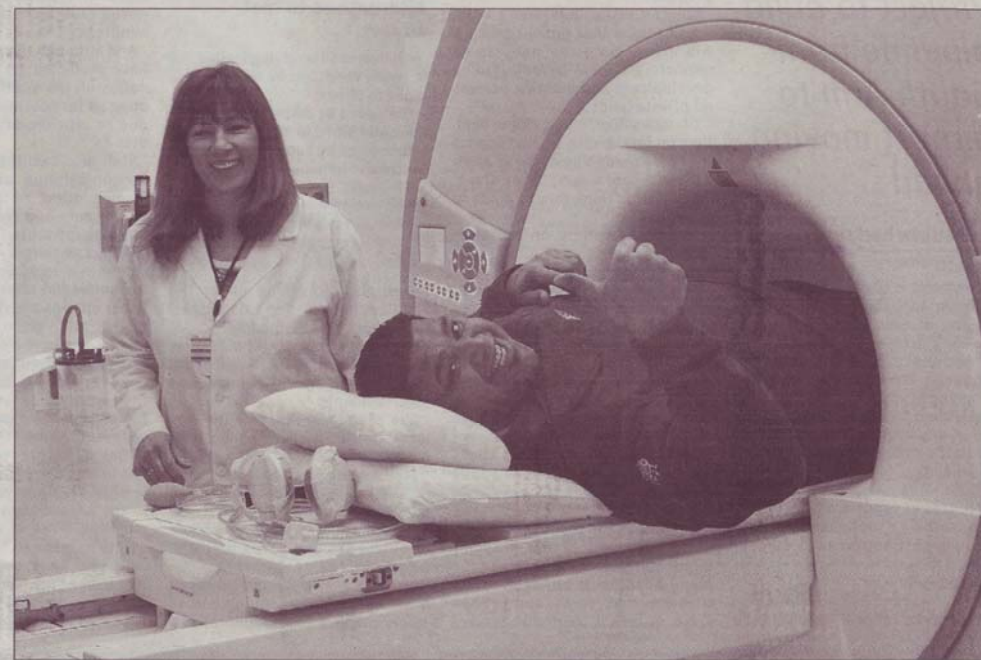
Singh, a 34-year-old longtime Richmond resident who has played for the B.C. Lions and St. Louis Rams, played patient during the official unveiling of the hospital's new \$4-million MRI and its tranquil imaging department, paid for by donations to the Richmond Hospital Foundation.

The oversized scanner is one-of-a-kind in B.C.'s public health care system, capable of treating patients as heavy as 550 pounds to a comfortable 30-minute scan.

"I'm pretty claustrophobic and pretty big too, (with) the old one, it's not a very pleasant process," he said.

Singh should know. He's had about six MRI scans all over his body through his football career.

MRI technologist Terry McCrossan led Thursday's demonstration on Singh's right knee. Stress from football has weakened it over the years, but it's still good enough to carry Singh's weight and buoyant person-



Matthew Hoekstra photo

MRI technologist Terry McCrossan prepares Richmond's Bobby Singh for an MRI Thursday at Richmond Hospital.

ality through his new enterprise: football camps for kids.

"I can do the camps as long as I don't have to run around," he said with a grin. The running is left to the "younger guys."

Richmond's MRI is staffed to accommodate seven patients a day, about 1,500 per year. Chief radiologist Dr. Ian Dunn said a patient's average wait for a scan is about three months and is vital to health care.

"It gives diagnoses that aren't possible in any other way."

Dunn said an MRI scan is the only way to accurately detect multiple sclerosis and it gives precise details about sports injuries.

It also allows patients like pregnant women and children to be scanned without any radiation and allows doctors to identify disease at an earlier stage and

intervene sooner.

Patients previously had to travel to Vancouver hospitals for an MRI.

The scanner is housed in a new area of the hospital, the Milan and Maureen Ilich Medical Imaging Centre, paying tribute to the Richmond couple who donated half the money needed for the project.

The centre accepted its first patient Nov. 30, 2009.