

## CAN YOU REALLY TRUST AN MRI SCAN?

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#### Introduction

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is great!  
It's non-invasive, pretty much zero risk and it gives great pictures of knees!  
However, MRI is just one element in a much bigger overall equation.

#### Question 1

When is an MRI not an MRI?

**Answer:** When it's a rubbish MRI done on an old 1.5T scanner that gives grainy, fuzzy, low res images that really can't be relied upon.

**Message:** There's a world of difference between different MRI scanners, and the current gold standard is a 3T scanner.

#### Question 2

What should your threshold be for referring for an MRI scan?

**Answer:** If you think of it, do it!

**Message:** MRI is a great tool, not just for helping confirm a suspected diagnosis but also, importantly, for screening for other potential unexpected pathologies.

#### Question 3

Should you ever operate on someone's knee without actually doing an MRI scan first.

**Answer:** Absolutely totally no way!!

**Message:** An arthroscopy shows you just the surfaces of the intra-synovial elements of a knee joint. It doesn't show you what's inside the bones or what's deep. If you do an arthroscopy without first doing an MRI then you're an idiot and you're dangerous, and sooner or later you're going to miss something really important, like a bone tumour.

#### Conclusion

MRI is an incredibly useful tool. However, clinical diagnosis should rely on a thorough clinical history, an appropriately targeted clinical examination and a review of all appropriate imaging in context.

An MRI should not be taken as gospel (particularly not just a report), and there is no substitute for knowledge, experience and judgement.