

Having build MRI's from South Florida to South Carolina, Thornton Construction completed Tident's MRI facility and reception, housing the Hitachi Airis. Coordination was key to this successful project since it was being build next to the hospitals emergency area.

This hi-profile project was featured in The Summerville Journal Scene on March 31, 1999.

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New 'open' MRI finds home in Summerville

by SHIRLEY HUNEYCUTT
Special Writer

March 7 was a red-letter, much-anticipated, filled-with-excitement day for Summerville Medical Center. It was the day the Center's new \$1.2 million open MRI arrived from Japan.

The sun was shining; the sporadic winds were chilly; the preparations were complete.

At the end of the street fronting the emergency room entrances, two 18-wheelers sat silently, their cargo awaiting the coming of workers and cranes to divest the trucks of their heavy burdens.

The crates on one truck carried accessory parts for the MRI, skirting, table, and more. The crate on the other encompassed the Aeris II four-ton magnet.

The magnet and accessories were produced by Hitachi in Japan. They were shipped to a California port where they were loaded on trucks and delivered to Summerville Medical Center.

On Saturday, hospital personnel were like children waiting to open their Christmas presents, impatient at the slow-moving efforts to move the massive equipment from the trucks into the specialized suite that had been prepared for it.

Columbia Crane Service was charged with the responsibility for taking the crate off the trucks and putting the equipment in place. The effort seemed to move at a snail's pace as every step was checked and double-checked to avoid any accident.

First the truck containing the accessories was moved from the back to the front of the building. There the crates were opened and the parts taken inside to be assembled on the special metal sheet that marked the spot on the floor where the MRI would sit.

When that phase was completed, the remaining truck was backed as close as

away, and the MRI was set gently on the pavement where its remaining supports were removed.

Finally, it was moved on a runway of compressed air down the hallway and into its own resting place. It had to be warmed up to 94 degrees to stabilize the magnetic field. Then adjustments will be made, using volunteers as patients, and technicians will be trained, since most of them received their training in X-ray and radiology. The MRI will be kept at a constant 94 degrees.

Dr. Sean Smith, radiologist at Summerville Medical Center, was present with his sons to observe the arrival of the MRI. They could hardly contain their enthusiasm, moving from one site of activity to another to determine what progress was being made.

"The open MRI is good for people who are claustrophobic," Smith said. "The other MRI puts patient into a kind of tunnel and some of them simply can't take that. Another advantage of the open MRI is that I can get to the patient; I can move an arm around if I have to."

Later Smith explained the MRI.

"It is better able to see the insides, the organs, X-ray shows the bones, but it doesn't show the organs," he said.

The MRI makes a noise which may cause some concern in the patient, but the noise is simply the machine working as it takes pictures. There is one big magnet on the top; another on the bottom.

The patient undergoes no special preparation for the MRI, as is often the case when X-ray is scheduled.

Incidentally, MRI stands for "magnetic resonance imaging."

Smith said he expects 15 patients a day will use the MRI when the machine is at its peak and its use will escalate as time goes on. He has no doubts the machine will pay for itself in short

