

Gorilla gets MRI at Bronx Zoo

March 26 2009

Talk about house calls! The Wildlife Conservation Society thanks The Brain Tumor Foundation and its "Road To Early Detection" campaign for their assistance in performing a brain scan on a gorilla at the Bronx Zoo.

The on-site procedure—performed by dozens of wildlife veterinarians, zookeepers, and medical personnel from several institutions—was made possible by the Bobby Murcer Mobile [MRI](#) Unit, a 48-foot-long MRI facility on wheels that conducted a comprehensive neurological scan on the brain of Fubo, a 42-year-old western lowland gorilla. Fubo is one of two adult males, or silverbacks, living in the Bronx Zoo's Congo Gorilla Forest exhibit, which houses one of the largest breeding groups of western lowland [gorillas](#) in North America (more than 20 individuals). Fubo recently suffered a seizure, prompting WCS health and curatorial staff to seek out a [neurological diagnosis](#).

The Brain Tumor Foundation responded to WCS's request for assistance with Fubo by sending its mobile MRI facility and staff to the Bronx Zoo's campus, free of charge. The gorilla was sedated for the two-hour procedure, placed into the MRI's magnetic tube for the scans (a snug fit for a patient with gorilla-sized shoulders), and returned to the Congo Gorilla Forest as planned. Under strict protocol, the MRI Unit was cleaned and sanitized after the procedure.

The MRI images were interpreted by staff of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and reviewed with WCS's Global Health Program staff. The findings indicated that Fubo's condition was caused by a lesion in the left

temporal lobe of his brain. The specific cause of the problem has not yet been determined. Veterinary staff has concluded that Fubo's condition is not treatable with surgery, so they will continue to treat the gorilla with medication in an effort to control his seizures and other clinical signs.

"Thanks to the generosity of The Brain Tumor Foundation, we were able to perform an MRI of Fubo's brain and this gave us insights into the possible cause of his illness. The ability to use their mobile MRI unit allowed us to perform this procedure right here at the Bronx Zoo," said Dr. Paul P. Calle, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Zoological Health Program and a participant in the MRI procedure.

"These images have given us a better understanding of the possible causes of Fubo's problem and have helped to guide his care. It was a great opportunity to enlist the most progressive technology for the diagnosis of people with similar problems to our close relative the endangered gorilla. The procedure contributes to the knowledge of veterinary healthcare of gorillas and other primates which will help WCS's health care programs and those of all facilities that house and care for gorillas."

The Brain Tumor Foundation's Mobile Unit has recently embarked on the "Road to [Early Detection](#)," a national campaign that promotes the early detection of [brain tumors](#). The Unit travels New York City and its five boroughs offering free brain scans to everyone, especially those who do not have medical services available to them. The Unit is named after Bobby Murcer, the professional baseball player and broadcaster who was an advocate for The Brain Tumor Foundation's "Road to Early Detection" campaign. Murcer succumbed to a brain tumor in July of 2008.

"We were pleased to help the Wildlife Conservation Society in the diagnosis of Fubo's condition. Our message of early detection extends to all New Yorkers. We need to build awareness about the importance of

early detection in the battle against brain tumors," said Dr. Patrick Kelly, Founder and President of The Brain Tumor Foundation. "If found early, most brain tumors can be removed before symptoms become apparent. The only way to do this is with an MRI brain scan. Our goal is to make MRI brain scans as routine as examinations for breast, colon, and prostate cancer."

An MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is a frequently used technique for imaging structures within the body. The method is more effective at imaging organs and soft tissue than the CT scan (computed tomography) and is often used in neurological scans. The scans are achieved with a powerful magnetic field that aligns hydrogen atoms within the body of the patient. The hydrogen atoms then produce magnetic fields of their own that can be manipulated with additional magnetic fields and detected by the scanning mechanism.

Source: Wildlife Conservation Society ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Gorilla gets MRI at Bronx Zoo (2009, March 26) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-03-gorilla-mri-bronx-zoo.html>

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