



Thomas Patterson Emerald

A new \$2.5 million brain scanner resides in Straub Hall. The functional magnetic resonance imaging machine is designed for research into the workings of the brain when subjects perform certain activities, but not for helping with clinical diagnoses.

fMRI sheds new light on brain

■ Researchers can use a new imaging system to study perception more effectively

By Eric Martin
Oregon Daily Emerald

University psychology and biology researchers are using a sophisticated imaging machine to better examine how the brain functions in the hope of yielding answers to some confounding cognitive questions.

Lead researchers are testing the functional magnetic resonance imaging machine, or fMRI, and said they hope to have it ready for approved research projects in the next four weeks.

The \$2.5 million brain scanner is the centerpiece in an interdisciplinary research endeavor aimed at forming a better understanding of how humans think, learn and create. It's also only the second such machine in the nation housed at a non-medical school. The other is in the psychology department at Princeton University.

Private donors and government agencies such as the Department of Defense and National Institutes of Health are funding the roughly \$20 million project, called the Brain, Biology and Machine Initiative.

"It's something that has a lot of really interesting applications," Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies Rich Linton said.

"From the most basic point of view, how the brain functions is universally important."

Results of fMRI studies could enhance teaching and learning methods. The answers could provide clues to better understand how humans perceive their surroundings. The work may establish more concrete biological evidence of the effects on the brain of illegal and prescription drugs.

MRI facility Director and research associate Ray Nunnally said each study is a brush stroke in a mural of the brain's unrealized and unmapped potential. Nunnally said he has worked with MRI

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