

Surgeons Get Practice Using Brains Made On 3D Printers

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How much practice would you want your brain surgeon to have? Probably a lot and the more specific that practice is to your particular brain, the better.

Now, by combining models of brains made on 3D printers and images of simulated surgery, faculty at the University of Florida (UF) are making sure their surgeons get just this kind of training.

Researchers at the university have developed a unique "mixed reality" surgery simulator that gives doctors-in-training a chance to perform real surgery techniques on 3D-printed models derived from actual patients' brains and skulls. Researchers create the models by feeding MRI and CT scans taken from previous patients into 3D printers. Simulated skin covers the printed skulls.

Surgeons-in-training can then, for example, insert a needle through a "patient's" cheek, into the appropriate part of the brain while watching the needle's progress on an imaging screen, just as they would with a device called a fluoroscope during a real surgery. The UF team developed software and completed modifications to imaging tools to make this simulated fluoroscopy possible.

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