

It may sound fantastical, but some forms of brain cancer may be treatable with magnets

I look at any therapeutic claims about magnets with a huge dose of skepticism. Generally I assume it is a scam, or an overenthusiastic researcher, until proven otherwise. But I will look at plausible claims fairly. That is the background and attitude I had when [I first saw this report](#), of a magnetic treatment for a serious brain tumor.

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So how does the new treatment allegedly work?

The patient in this case report wore a helmet fixed with three powerful magnets (it kinda looks like a drinking hat, with the magnets being beer-can sized).

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The idea, based on in vitro studies, is that the powerful alternating magnetic field disrupts the function of mitochondria, the energy producing organelles inside cells. This causes them to produce a much greater amount of oxygen free radicals, which can cause cellular damage. If the concentration of free radicals gets high enough this can trigger apoptosis – cell death. Cancer cells are more metabolically active than healthy cells, so the hope is treatment will have a greater effect on cancer cells, pushing them over the threshold to cell death, without causing significant harm to healthy cells.

The overall result of the treatment was that the tumor shrunk in size by 31%.

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