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Brain Surgery Now an Out Patient Option



By [Boyd Huppert](#), KARE 11 News.

For the regulars at the Sunburg Creamery Café the laughs pour out as freely as the coffee on a six-pot morning. But today's breakfast comes with a side of seriousness.

Dean Shuck — a Kandiyohi County commissioner and longtime area farmer — has a benign tumor alongside his brain that has already cost him the hearing in his left ear.

What dean will do is break ground for Fairview University Medical Center when he becomes one of the first patients placed inside the hospital's new 3.5 million dollar alternative to brain surgery.

"Instead of using a metal or a steel knife we're using a radiation knife," said Dr. Stephen Haines of Fairview University hospital's Department of

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Neurosurgery.

The device called the gamma knife directs 201 radiation beams at a tumor with pinpoint accuracy in one intense dose.

"This white spot is the tumor," said Radiation Oncologist, Dr. Paul Sperduto pointing to an image of Shuck's brain. "It will gradually get smaller, it may continue to shrink for up to seven years."

So precise is the radiation delivery - Dean's skull is literally screwed to the machine to keep him from moving even a fraction of an inch.

Some patients spend just minutes in the gamma knife – Dean's treatment will last about an hour. Had he undergone traditional brain surgery dean might have spent a week in the hospital afterward

But once the screws are out, Dean will be free to leave. By tomorrow he'll be back at the cafe for coffee.

It's not brain surgery. To Dean Shuck it's better.

This type of brain surgery has been performed around the world for years. The Mayo Clinic's first was in 1990, but it's just getting started in the Twin Cities.

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