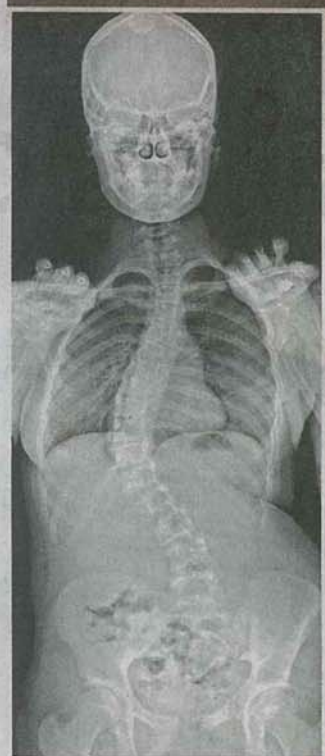


The magic of 3D images at a fraction of the risk

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"This is a big relief" ... Jaimi Nuttall having the scan and, left, the result. Photo: Steven Siewert

Erik Jensen HEALTH

WHEN Jaimi Nuttall had her first full body scan – a stitched together X-ray of her bent spine – a number of her lower vertebrae were jumbled together. She and her doctors thought half of one of the bones was missing.

But yesterday a revolutionary three-dimensional scan of her body, the first of its kind in Australia, revealed all of the vertebrae were intact and she had scoliosis that would be manageable with surgery.

"This is the last and most recent quantum leap in medical imaging," her surgeon, Dr Davor Saravanja, said. "I expected her

to have problems from her scoliosis by the age of 45. However, to fix the curve then is a big deal. To fix it in a 15-year-old is much easier because they're more flexible and the bones don't have osteoporosis."

The EOS imager, installed last month at Dalcross Adventist Hospital in Killara, creates a single scan of the entire body using as little as one-1000th of the radiation absorbed during a traditional CT scan.

A three-dimensional image of the spine is immediately available, giving doctors much more clarity of deformities previously fully uncovered only during surgery. The risk of cancer from radiation, particularly in adolescents, is also greatly reduced.

"We'll do more scans than we would otherwise, instead of umming and ahing and doing one scan a year," Dr Saravanja said. "I would say one in 10 patients will be able to get an early diagnosis."

Jaimi, 14, was surprised by the 70 degree curve in her spine. Outwardly, there is little sign of scoliosis. But the clearer images from the \$1 million scanner – and the fact that all her vertebrae were intact – was welcome news.

"On the X-ray, because it was stitched together, I thought I had half a vertebra. This is a big relief," she said. "It was much easier than the X-ray. I didn't have to move around and change positions. It was just a quick thing."