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Role of MRI in Assessment of First Seizures in Pediatric Patients

Rahul Gangwar[1]*, Rashmi Singh[2], Anjali Singh Raghav[3], Shivam Babu Gautam[4], Karan Goswami[5], Sandeep Yadav[6]

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Radiological Imaging Techniques, SRMS Institute of Paramedical Sciences, Bareilly (U.P).
[2]Research Fellow, Department of Radiological Imaging Techniques, Teerthankar Mahaveer University, Moradabad (U.P).
[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Radiological Imaging Techniques, GD Goenka Health Care Acedamy, Bareilly (U.P).
[4]Assistant Professor, Department of Radiological Imaging Techniques, SRMS Institute of Paramedical Sciences, Bareilly (U.P).
[5]Research Fellow, Department of Radiological Imaging Techniques, SRMS Institute of Paramedical Sciences, Bareilly (U.P).
[6]Research Fellow, Department of Radiological Imaging Techniques, Vivekananda Global University, Jaipur (Rajasthan).

***Corresponding Author:** Rahul Gangwar
*Email: gangwarrahul74@gmail.com

Abstract
Background: When a Pediatric patient has their first seizure, it's a medical emergency that calls for immediate answers about what's causing it. MRI shines as the go-to apparatus for spotting brain anomalies linked to these episodes.
Objective: This review digs into when doctors should order an MRI, the best timing for it, what it typically reveals, and why it matters for pediatric having their first seizure, whether triggered or not.
Methods: The scoured studies from 2015 to 2025, zeroing in on research about MRI findings in Pediatric patient aged 1 month to 18 years who had a first-time seizure.
Results: Doctors often turn to MRI when seizures start in one part of the brain, when neurological exams raise red flags, or when recovery takes too long. It frequently uncovers issues like malformed brain tissue, tumors, scarring in the temporal lobe, or damage from lack of oxygen. These discoveries guide decisions about surgery or diagnosing epilepsy.
Conclusion: MRI is a game-changer for figuring out what's behind a pediatric's first seizure, especially when signs point to something serious. Smart imaging strategies and pediatric-friendly sedation make it both effective and safe.

Keywords: Pediatric Seizures; First-Time Seizure; MRI; Neuroimaging; Epilepsy; Brain Imaging, Children; Diagnostic Evaluation; Structural Abnormalities.

Introduction

Basics of MRI

MRI is a non-invasive imaging method that employs ionizing radiation to explore the structure and function of the body in both health and disease. It is quite often used in disease Detection, diagnosis, and therapy monitoring are all facets of the regimen. It is predicated on cutting-edge that innovation excites and uncovers modifications in protons' rotational axes in biological tissue water. It implements enormous magnets to generate an intense magnetic field that attracts the arrival of protons in human organisms. The protons are accelerated and spin out of equilibrium, once a current induced by is put into the patient pushing against the magnetic field's pull.MRI actuators have the versatility of measuring gaining authority released by protons when they if the RF field is turned off, it resets with the magnetic pole. The sum of electrical energy discharged + the time frame required the span it takes for protons to reunite with the magnetic pole varies depending spent waiting for protons to reunite with the magnetic pole varies relying on the circumstances and chemical formula of the molecules [26].

Pediatric First Seizure and MRI

In pediatric patients experiencing their first seizure, a brain MRI is often recommended to investigate potential underlying structural issues that could be causing the seizure. MRI is generally preferred over CT scans for this purpose due to its superior ability to detect subtle brain abnormalities and its lower radiation exposure. Neuroimaging, including MRI, helps identify conditions like tumors, malformations, or vascular abnormalities that might be related to the seizures.Every year, approximately 50–100 out of 100,000 pediatric experience a first seizure, and pinpointing the cause can be tricky[1].

The reasons vary widely, from harmless fever-driven episodes to worrisome brain issues like tumors or abnormal tissue growth. MRI stands out because it delivers crystal-clear images, can scan from different angles, and skips the radiation that makes CT scans riskier for young patients[3]. This review pulls together insights from 2015–2025 research to show how MRI helps with pediatric' first seizures. We'll cover when it's needed, the best ways to use it, what it tends to find, and how those findings shape treatment and long-term outcomes. Plus, we'll touch on challenges like keeping pediatric calm during scans and making MRI more accessible, alongside cool new advancements like stronger scanners and AI-powered analysis.

Epidemiology and Classification of Pediatric Seizures

Every year, 0.5–1% of children experience pediatric seizures, of which 25–50% manifest as their first unprovoked seizure[1]. Seizures can be classified as focal, generalized, or unknown onset by the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE), and their etiologies can be classified as structural, genetic, infectious, metabolic, immunological, or unknown[5]. Twenty to forty percent of spontaneous seizures have structural abnormalities that can be detected by MRI, highlighting the need of neuroimaging for precise diagnosis and risk assessment. [6]. Unless focal characteristics, protracted duration, or neurological abnormalities are present, a prompt MRI is less likely to be necessary for provoked seizures, such as those brought on by fever or trauma. [7]. Knowledge of seizure classification and epidemiology influences clinical therapy and the choice to explore neuroimaging[4].

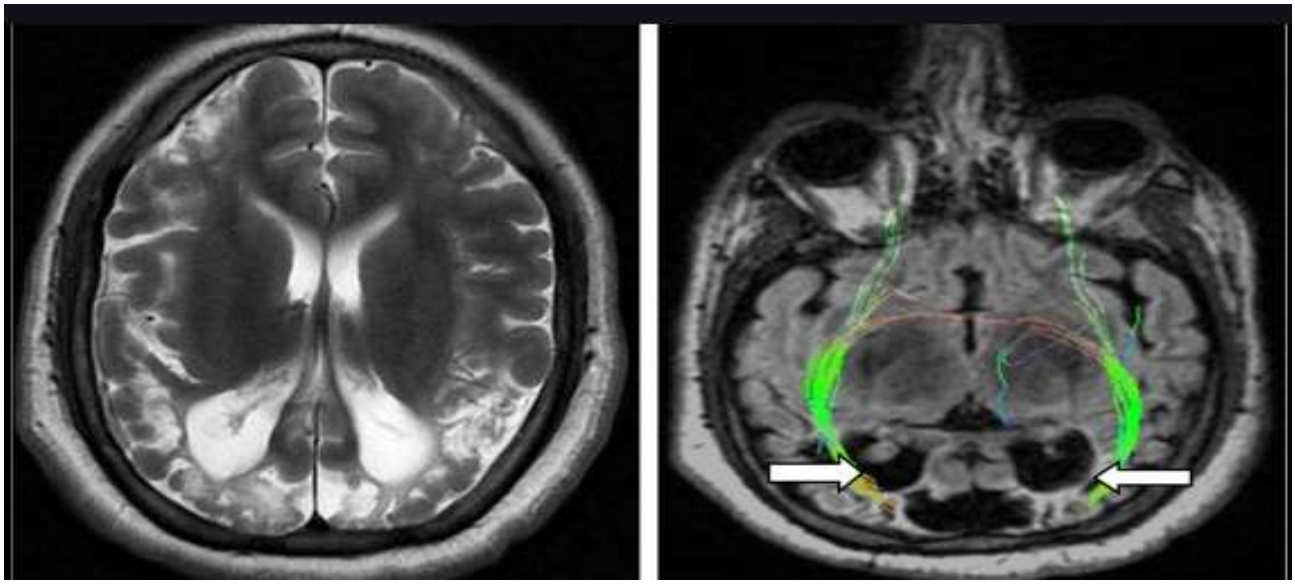


Figure 1: Pediatric Epilepsy Imaging

Indications for MRI in First-Time Seizures

The American Academy of Neurology and American Epilepsy Society lay out clear cases where MRI makes sense for a pediatric's first seizure[10,11]:

- Seizures kicking off in one brain spot: These are 2.5 times more likely to point to structural issues, like messed-up brain tissue or growths, because they're tied to a specific trouble spot[6].
- Weird neurological signs: Things like uneven strength, confusion, or nerve issues suggest something's off in the brain[9].
- Lingering aftereffects: If weakness or other problems stick around for over 24 hours, like in Todd's paralysis, it might mean brain damage or a structural flaw[9].
- Babies or pediatric with certain conditions: Pediatric under 1 or those showing signs of disorders like tuberous sclerosis or Sturge-Weber often have brain lesions[12].
- Intense, long seizures: Seizures dragging on past 30 minutes or resisting treatment need a fast MRI to check for things like strokes or bleeding[11].

For severe cases, suspected brain injuries, or worsening symptoms, an MRI within a day or two is urgent[11]. Pediatric who are stable with unprovoked seizures can get scanned later as outpatients[10]. This approach catches serious causes without over-scanning pediatric with low-risk issues, like fever-related seizures[7].

Table 1: Clinical Indications for MRI in Pediatric First-Time Seizures

Indication	Rationale	Likelihood of Abnormality
Focal onset seizures	Higher association with structural lesions	30–40%
Abnormal neurological exam	Suggests focal pathology	25–35%
Persistent postictal deficits	Indicates potential ischemic or structural cause	20–30%
Age <1 year	Higher prevalence of malformations	15–25%
Status epilepticus	Risk of acute injury (e.g., stroke, hemorrhage)	40–50%

MRI Protocols in Pediatric Seizure Assessment

MRI setups for pediatric aim to get sharp images fast while keeping things safe, especially for little ones who might wiggle. The main techniques are[14]:

- **T1 and T2 scans:** These give a close-up look at brain structures, spotting things like malformations, tumors, or shrunken tissue.
- **FLAIR scans:** They're great for picking up scarring or tissue changes, especially in the temporal lobe.
- **SWI scans:** These catch blood, calcium buildup, or funky blood vessels with pinpoint accuracy.
- **DWI scans:** They show where blood flow's low or tissue's swollen, key for checking oxygen-related damage.

Newer 3T MRI machines, which pack more power than older 1.5T models, boost image sharpness by 20–30%, making it easier to spot tiny issues like focal malformations[16]. Contrast scans, using safe dyes, are saved for cases like tumors or infections, with an eye on rare risks. Quick scans and tools to fix motion blur help 80–90% of pediatric who can't hold still, cutting down on redo scans[15]. Short sessions, around 15–20 minutes, keep pediatric comfortable while getting the job done.

Table 2: MRI Sequences for Pediatric Seizure Assessment

Sequence	Purpose	Typical Findings	Acquisition Time
T1/T2-weighted	Anatomical detail	Cortical malformations, tumors	4–6 min
FLAIR	Gliosis, sclerosis	Mesial temporal sclerosis	3–5 min
SWI	Hemorrhage, calcification	Vascular lesions, cavernomas	2–4 min
DWI	Ischemic changes	Hypoxic-ischemic injury, stroke	1–2 min
Contrast-enhanced T1	Tumor, infection characterization	Enhancing tumors, abscesses	3–5 min

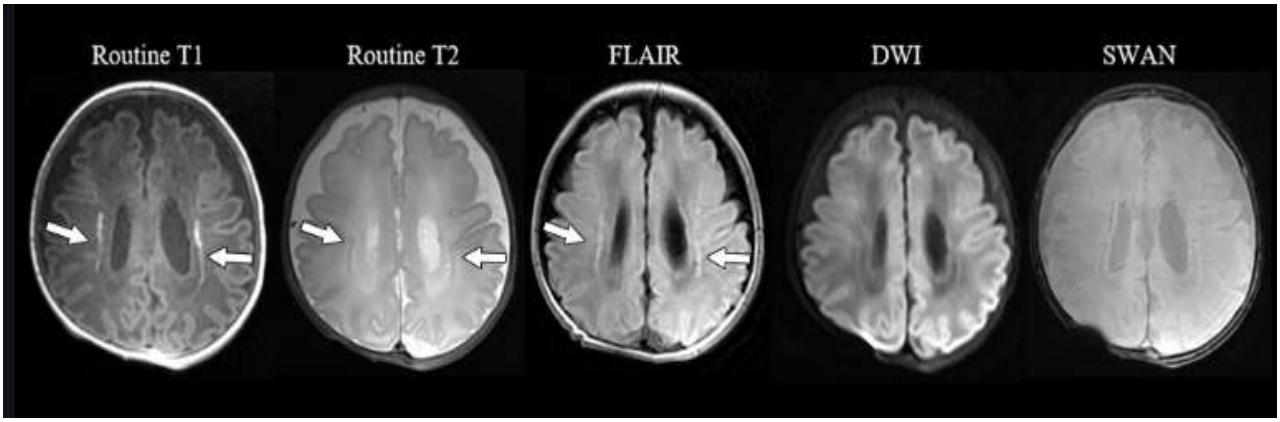


Figure 2: Diagram of a pediatric MRI protocol, showing axial view of T1, T2, FLAIR, SWAN, and DWI sequences.

Common MRI Findings

MRI identifies structural abnormalities brain issues in 20–30% of pediatric with first seizures, giving doctors crucial clues for diagnosis and treatment. [6] A general review of findings from recent studies highlights prevalent etiologies:

1.Cortical Malformations

Focal cortical dysplasia (FCD), the top find, shows up in 10–15% of cases as bright T2 spots with fuzzy boundaries between brain layers, usually in the frontal or temporal zones[17]. FCD often leads to tough-to-control epilepsy, with 50–70% of pediatric needing a surgical consult[18]. Other

malformations, like weird brain folds or misplaced tissue, pop up in 2–5% of cases[19].

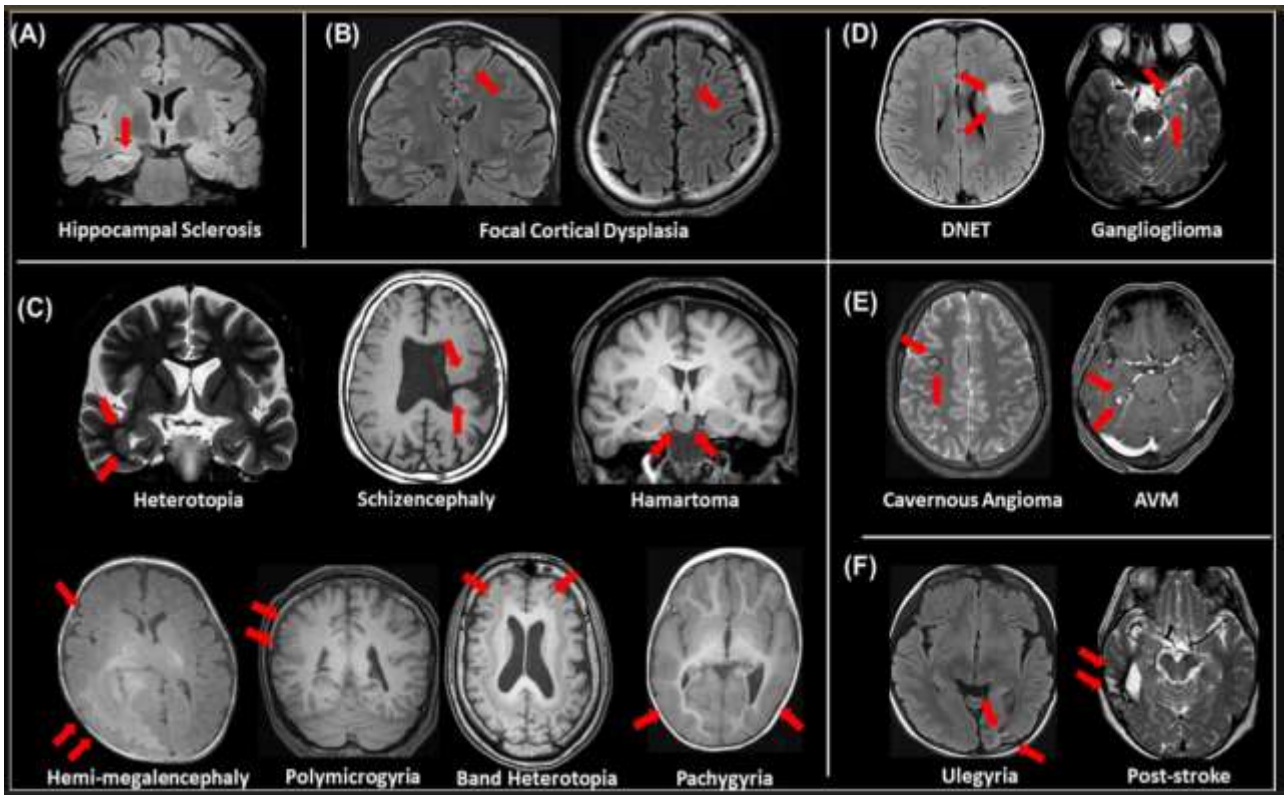


Figure 3: An overview of visible epileptogenic lesions (red arrows). **(A)** Hippocampal sclerosis, **(B)** focal cortical dysplasia, **(C)** other malformations of cortical development, **(D)** neoplasms, **(E)** vascular malformations, and **(F)** cerebrovascular lesions.

2.Tumors

Low-grade tumors or specific growths (DNETs), seen in 5–10% of cases, look like bright, sharp-edged T2 spots, often in the temporal or frontal areas[20]. Surgery usually stops seizures in 80–90% of these pediatrics[21].

3.Blood Vessel Problems

Abnormal vessels or cavernomas, found in 2–5% of cases, show as gaps or blood deposits on SWI scans. These might need procedures like embolization or surgery[22,23].

4.Infections

Brain infections or abscesses, detected in 3–5% of cases, appear as bright T2 spots with limited flow on DWI, often requiring antibiotics[24]. Herpes-related brain inflammation, hitting the temporal lobe in 60% of cases, is a big one[25].

5.Post-Traumatic Changes

Scars or damage from past injuries, seen in 3–5% of pediatric with trauma history, show as bright T2 marks, raising seizure risk two or three times[6].

Key Trends: Localized seizures show issues in 30–40% of cases, compared to 10–20% for generalized ones. Malformations and tumors are common in pediatrics under 10, while temporal lobe scarring shows up more in teens[6]. Brain issues increase seizure repeat risk (hazard ratio: 3.2), guiding surgery decisions, with 60–80% of malformation cases and 90% of tumor cases seizure-free after surgery[21].

Table 3: Prevalence and Clinical Implications of MRI Findings

Finding	Prevalence	Typical MRI Features	Clinical Implication
Focal cortical dysplasia	10–15%	T2-hyperintense, blurred gray-white junction	Surgical evaluation, drug-resistant epilepsy
Low-grade glioma/DNET	5–10%	T2-hyperintense, well-demarcated	Resection, high seizure control rate
AVM/cavernoma	2–5%	SWI flow voids, hemosiderin	Embolization/resection
Encephalitis/abscess	3–5%	T2-hyperintense, DWI restriction	Antimicrobial therapy, serial imaging
Post-traumatic gliosis	3–5%	T2-hyperintense scars	Increased recurrence risk, monitoring

MRI vs. Other Tools

CT scans, fast for emergencies, only catch issues in 10–15% of cases and use radiation, which slightly ups leukemia risk in pediatrics[3]. EEG picks up weird brain activity in 50–60% of cases but misses structural details[9]. PET and SPECT scans help plan surgery for stubborn epilepsy[13]. MRI's better detection (20–30%) and safety make it the best pick[6].

Impact of MRI Findings on Management and Prognosis

MRI findings shape clinical decision-making[8]:

- Diagnosis: Sorting out epilepsy types or ruling out urgent problems[8].
- Treatment: Helping pick meds or plan surgeries, with 60–80% success for malformations and 80–90% for tumors after surgery[21].
- Outlook: Brain issues raise repeat seizure risk (hazard ratio: 3.2), shaping follow-up. Early MRI boosts outcomes in 70–80% of fixable cases[8].

Challenges in Pediatric MRI

- Sedation: About 30–50% of pediatric under 6 need it, using safe drugs like propofol. Breathing risks are low (<1%) with monitoring. Non-drug tricks cut sedation use by 20–30%[15].
- Wiggling: Blurry images hit 10–20% of scans, but quick scans and motion fixes help 80–90% of cases[15].
- Access and Price: MRI machines are rare (<10%) in some areas, and costs ($500–$2000) block access.

Recent Advances

- 3T Scanners: Catch more issues (85% vs. 70% for 1.5T)[16].
- AI Tools: Spot malformations with 90% accuracy, speeding things up by 20–30%[15].
- Fancy Scans (fMRI/DTI): Map seizure spots and brain pathways, cutting surgery risks in 80% of cases[13].

Table 4: Recent Advances in Pediatric MRI for Seizure Assessment

Advance	Benefit	Impact	Challenges
3T MRI	Higher sensitivity (85%)	Detects subtle lesions	Higher cost, limited access
AI-aided diagnosis	90% accuracy, faster interpretation	Reduces radiologist workload	Requires large datasets
fMRI/DTI	Maps epileptogenic zones, tracts	Minimizes surgical deficits	Longer scan time, expertise needed

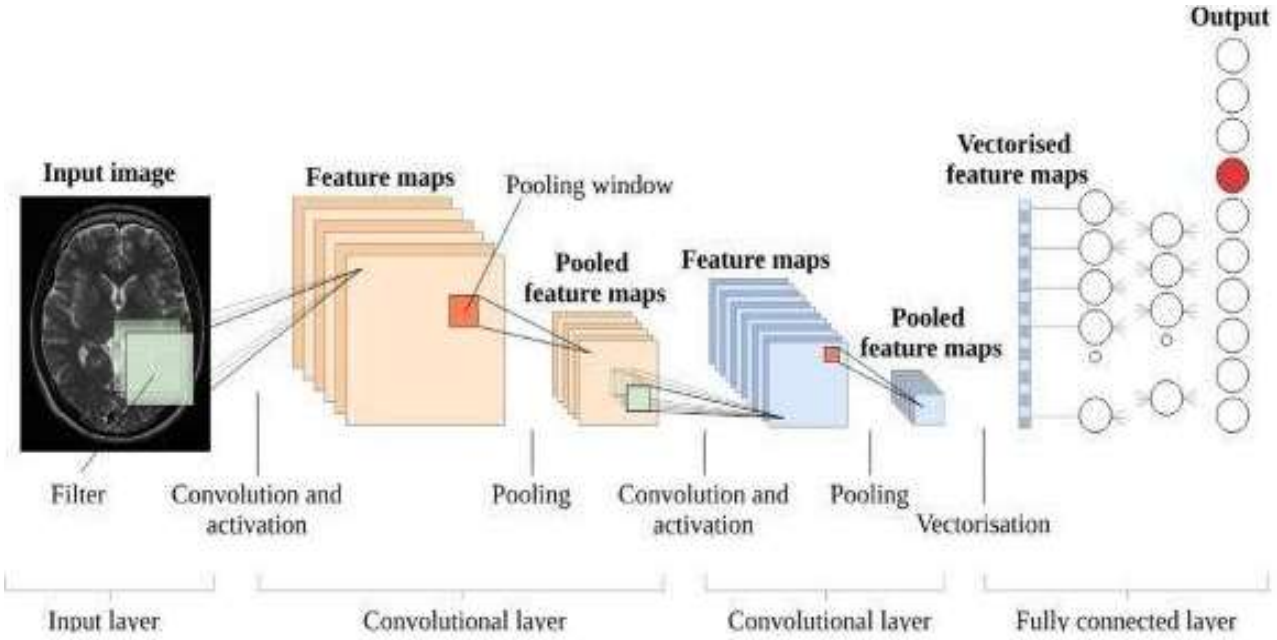


Figure 4: Architecture of convolutional neural network using medical image

Conclusion

MRI is must for assessing pediatrics first seizures, excelling at finding structural problems. Tailored protocols, powerful machines like 3T MRI, and AI-driven diagnostics enhance accuracy, but challenges like sedation and access need innovative solutions. Looking ahead, Future research should focus on portable MRI and AI to improve global access.

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