



## HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# Doctors Remove Live Worm from Australian Woman's Brain

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A brain doctor in Australia received a huge surprise during an operation on a patient's brain last year:

"Gosh, what is that, it's moving. Take it out of my hands."

That is what Australian neurosurgeon Hari Priya Bandi said about finding a **worm**, or **parasite**, last year in a patient's brain.

Bandi was looking for the unexplained cause of **symptoms** in a 64-year-old woman.

She found the cause after drilling a small hole in the woman's skull and looking at her brain. Bandi performed the operation at Canberra Hospital in 2022. She discussed the discovery this week after publishing a study with Dr. Sanjaya Senanayake in *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

The doctors said the worm was a roundworm native to Australia. It was about eight centimeters. Before the discovery, it was not known to affect humans. The worms are often found in carpet pythons, a kind of large snake found in Australia and on some Pacific islands.

Senanayake was on duty at the hospital last year when the worm was found.

"I got a call saying: 'We've just removed a live worm from this patient's brain,'" he said.

The woman started medical treatment earlier in 2022 after saying she was experiencing depression and forgetfulness. Brain images showed changes over a three-month period.

Bandi's investigation was expected to show an infection or a cancerous **tumor**. Instead, she found the worm.

“Everyone in that operating theater was absolutely **stunned**,” Senanayake said of the “**wriggling**” thing.

Before the operation, the patient had come to a hospital in New South Wales with stomach sickness, pain, and **sweats** at night.

Bandi said the patient did not show any problems from the worm removal. Her mental health is improving, too, but some problems continue.

“She was so **grateful** to have an answer for what has been causing her trouble for so very long,” Bandi said. The patient has not been back to the hospital. Doctors gave her some medicine to kill parasites. Bandi said the doctors are continuing to watch the patient’s overall health.

“We’re keeping a close eye on her,” Senanayake told an Australian broadcaster.

The doctors believe the woman may have accidentally eaten the worm’s eggs. She lives in the same area as the carpet python. The python **sheds** the worms and their eggs in its waste. They believe it is possible that the woman gathered some native plants to eat, and they had the worm’s eggs on them.

I’m Dan Friedell.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for Learning English based on a report by The Associated Press.*

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## Words in This Story

**worm** -n. a long thin simple animal

**parasite** -n. a plant or animal that lives on another plant or animal from which it gets food and protection

**symptom** -n. a sign of disease or infection

**tumor** -n. a mass of tissue that is made up of abnormal cells

**stunned** -adj. shocked, very surprised

**wriggle** -v. moving in small, quick twisting movements from side to side

**sweats** -n. (pl.) repeatedly producing fluid from the skin as a sign of sickness

**grateful** -adj. feeling and showing thanks

**shed** -v. to lose something naturally; to have something drop away

*We want to hear from you. What did you think when you heard about the worm in the woman's brain?*