

# Research News:

## Research News From MonashHeart, Monash Medical Centre, Clayton Campus

By Karen Anderson Weller,  
Chief Paediatric Technologist



I have been a member of the Paediatric Cardiology team since 1992.

Through the 90's we used to frequently sedate children between the ages of 6 months and 3 years of age in order to perform a routine cardiac ultrasound.

Cardiac ultrasound is a common diagnostic tool used to diagnose complex and simple congenital heart disease. A full examination takes around 1 hour. Imagine trying to keep an infant still for an hour!

Sedation used to be given orally, 1/2 hour before the examination. As with all drugs, there are risk factors associated. The most common factors we experienced were hyperactivity, nausea and vomiting, often ending in only very limited information being gained and the child having to come back for another visit some weeks down the track.

Unfortunately this was a common outcome and proved to be very stressful for the family and technical staff alike.

In 1999 we extended the Cardiology Department. We planned to improve the environment by having a larger room that would accommodate a large single bed rather than an examination couch. This would enable parents to lie down with their child, give them cuddles, even breast feed.

We moved into our new room in 2000. Then along came Shirley Mates with her son Cameron for his routine echocardiogram.

Shirley came up with some very interesting ideas, took her ideas to HeartKids and by 2002 we had in place a fabulous, child and parent friendly laboratory.

The Waverley Kiwanis Club kindly donated an entertainment unit including a TV / DVD player (incidentally Shirley's husband Brian belongs to the Whitehorse Kiwanis Club who work very closely with Waverley).

The local Splash's Swimming School did a 'Swimathon' for HeartKids, raising hundreds of dollars which was used to buy educational toys and children's furniture.

HeartKids donated further funds for purchasing DVDs, videos and books.

Then the magic happened! The technologists noticed a marked decrease in the requirement for sedation. Children would come in, lie down with mum or dad, watch some videos, have some fun with the toys, have their ultrasound and would not want to leave until the video had finished!!!!

As a result of these changes over the past 5 years, we are sedating less than 10% of all children in the 6 month to 3 year age group.

The Paediatric Cardiology team at Monash have been so impressed with these changes, we are currently looking at publishing our findings in the hope that other Paediatric laboratories around the globe will adopt a similar child friendly programme.

Thanks HeartKids - without your generosity, these simple, yet very successful changes would not have been possible.

From the bottom of our hearts, again thank you

Karen