

Premature Infants' Follow Up Study NEWSLETTER 2002



Welcome to the first newsletter from the follow up group. We hope you will enjoy hearing about what is going at the Royal Women's Hospital.

PREMS IN THE BEST OF HANDS

Did you know that Victoria has the world's best survival rate for premature babies?

The Statewide study of which your child is a part, **VICS (Victorian Infant Collaborative Study)** has followed the progress of premature babies over two decades. The results are published in world recognised medical and scientific journals.

Research team leader **Professor Lex Doyle** said that the survival rate of babies of birth weight 500-999 grams born in Victoria had improved from one in four to three in four in less than 18 years.

He said that one of the major reasons for the increased survival is that most of these tiny babies are now born in one of the three major maternity hospitals in the State.

When Prof Doyle started working with premature babies in 1975 there were few specialised intensive care beds and ventilators were not suitable for tiny babies.



Two year old Brady doing part of the standard developmental test.

BABY FACTS

Last year 445 babies were admitted to NICU at RWH and a further 651 were admitted directly to Special Care.

In the 1990's 75 percent of babies born weighing less than 1000g survived. Three decades ago only 5 percent would have lived.

A baby born 24 weeks after conception and weighing at least 500g now has a 64 percent chance of survival.



Now that the survival rate for the very tiny premature babies is so high, our goal now is to make sure that these very early babies are able to look forward to a healthy life free of any major health problems.

One of the ways we are able to monitor the health of the tiny babies is to have a group of children who are born in the same year but are full term and of normal birth weight. These children are very important in our studies and we are grateful to their parents for allowing them to help us in our research.

News from the 9th floor at RWH

The NICU has now moved across to the other side of the lifts and now occupies three large rooms. There are now ventilator beds for seventeen babies, making this the largest NICU in Victoria.

There are 170 nurses working around the clock providing the very best of care for these special babies.

New research studies to help Prem babies.

There are now many more studies now being carried out to improve the care and longterm outcome for tiny preemies.

One of the new studies, **VIBES -Victorian Infant Brain Study** is measuring brain waves with tiny sensors on the scalp to see if we can identify the risks for brain injury in very tiny prem babies. We will assess the development of these children when they are two years old.



VICS GROUP 1997

This is a very important group of children because they are part of the Statewide follow up . Every child born in 1997 who was born before 28 weeks or weighed less than one Kg is part of this study, along with a full term child born during the same year.

If your child was born in 1997 you will recall that when we last saw you for the 2 year old check up we had hoped that we would recall all the children again when they reached 5 years of age. We have now decided that it is better to wait until they are around **6 to 7 years old**. We now feel that we can better assess how the children are developing when they have already been at school for a year or two.

We definitely want to stay in touch, so **please let us know if you are moving**. A special thank you to all the families who have already contacted us. We are really looking forward to seeing you all again in the next couple of years

The TIPP study

The results from this study were published in 2001. It showed that although the medicine called Indomethacin given to tiny babies decreased the rate of bleeding in the brain and the need for cardiac surgery it did not have any effect on development or survival at 18 months of age.

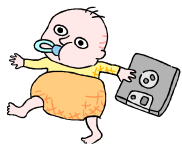


Aren't they worth it?

Two year old Tatiana.

Born at 24 weeks and 5 days, weighing 604 grams.

Now a happy, healthy little two year old.



STAFF NEWS

Although Prof Lex Doyle is away for the next few months, he is keeping very busy writing papers and trying to make use of all of our research. We hope to have some news to share with you all soon about how these special children are turning out.



Kate is going on long service leave in September for two months. She is planning on visiting Southern Europe and catching up with old friends in the Northern hemisphere. No doubt she will come back with lots of stories and photos from her travels.

CONTACT US

If you have an interesting story to tell us about your special child, drop us a line or send in a photo.

If you would like to help with publicity for the Mother's Day appeal next year make sure you let us know, the Public Affairs dept are always looking for a good story!

If you change your contact details



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Websites that you may be interested in

www.premiepress.com

www.preemie-l.org/austprem.html

www.premikidz.com Tiny sized prem baby clothes designed by a nurse from Sydney

