

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Toy radiology replicas help calm kids

Having an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or a CT scan (computed tomography) can be noisy, claustrophobic and a pretty scary experience, especially if you are a child. Because it's important to stay very still to get the best images, most children under 10 need to have a general anaesthetic when they have an MRI or CT scan.

To help prepare children for these procedures, Jane Kinsey, Service Manager Women, Child and Youth had some realistic models made of the CT scanner and MRI machine. She says prior to their appointment, the idea is for clinicians and radiology staff to encourage children to put teddies or dolls into the toy replicas of the machines as they explain what's going to happen.

Dr Nick Baker, NMDHB Paediatrician and Chief Medical Officer says preparing children for their visit to radiology has numerous benefits.

"It not only reduces the child's distress but that of their parents and the staff," he says. "The other benefit is it reduces the need for sedation or anaesthetic and the clinical time needed for the procedure – plus it increases the chances of the child lying still so we get good quality pictures."

Nick says preparing children through play and rehearsal using the models allows a child to understand what will happen, feel in control and helps them cope with what might have been a really 'scary' experience.

"The positive effects can be evident long term, with children becoming more confident during future procedures, something of particular importance for children with long term disability or chronic medical conditions," he says. "Kids speak play as their first language and if we want to communicate with them effectively, we have to use it."

Letting a 7 to 12 year old child play with a model first might make the process less scary and Nick says it can tip the balance to not needing an anaesthetic or needing a long time in the scanner room getting comfortable.

“If the play is done in advance and a child understands the whole process better, then we may be able to give them a scan or an MRI without a general anaesthetic.”

Ends

Photos attached:

PIC: Real and toy (in foreground) CT_MRI_0962

PIC: Toy CT&MRI_016 Teddies in the toy replicas

PIC: Toy CT&MRI_013

CAP: Eight year old Ke’ala Sheridan puts a teddy through the toy scanner under the supervision of Drs Nick Baker and Garth Smith, NMDHB Paediatricians.

Contact:

Jane Horder

Communications Advisor, Nelson Marlborough District Health Board

Private Bag 18, Nelson 7042, New Zealand

DDI: 03 539 5346, Internal ext 8346 or Cell 027 659 7090