

- “She’s the most outgoing, bubbly and sociable child. And we almost lost her.”



Mamamia Cares

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Erin when she was born.

By Dean Hutchison

This is the story of my daughter Erin. She’s the most outgoing, bubbly and sociable child I’ve ever known. And we almost lost her.

In 2006, my wife Kim was pregnant. We were doubly thrilled because we knew this was Kim’s only chance to have a baby. When she woke one night and said, “I’m feeling a bit off,” I wouldn’t normally have worried about it, but something made me sit up and take notice and we headed off to hospital to get it checked out.

On the way there, things went from not great to extremely bad in a matter of seconds. Kim was screaming in agony in the car and when we got to hospital she started fitting. The doctors gave me two choices – stay at that hospital and save Kim but lose our baby, or risk moving them to Westmead to save them both, but with a 50/50 chance that neither of them would make it there.

I’m lucky I made the right choice.

Kim had an emergency C-section as soon as we got to Westmead, at only 25½ weeks into her pregnancy. She was placed in an induced coma while Erin was fighting for her life, so for three days I didn’t know whether either of them would make it home.

Erin was so tiny – just 597 grams – that she was given only a five per cent chance of surviving. It was a heartbreaking percentage to deal with, but she was just a born fighter. Imagine a baby so small that my wedding ring could travel all the way up her arm to her shoulder. That was Erin.

Even while Kim was in a coma and Erin was struggling for every breath, I maintained an unusual level of optimism. Still, most nights were spent worrying and hoping. My way of coping was to immerse myself in information – that was my survival routine. I was constantly asking questions of the nurses, doctors, and specialists who attended Erin.



Erin today.

I asked many questions regarding the treatment that Erin was receiving – particularly the history and processes that led to the methods being used. Some of the information went over my head and some was lost in the stress of the situation, but a lot of it stayed with me.

On several occasions Erin's specialists credited CMRI with some of the treatments she underwent. CMRI's research went a long way to establishing neonatology as a subspecialty, and they helped pioneer neonatal intensive care units – a key element in the improved survival of premature babies like Erin. CMRI also helped introduce the principles of newborn care; and conducted cardiopulmonary studies in newborns.

Kim recovered from her ordeal quickly and was able to leave hospital 10 days later. After two and a half months in Neo-natal Intensive Care, and a further four weeks in the Special Care Unit, Erin was finally able to come home. A while later I was given the opportunity to join the team at CMRI as their Payroll Officer. I'd always supported and donated to CMRI, and now I had a very personal reason to be grateful for their work.

I consider myself incredibly fortunate that Erin has survived and prospered, and I feel proud to be a part of the amazing team at CMRI.

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