

The agonising decision no father should have to make, and the amazing medical care that helped this 'little fighter' survive

- Dean Hutchinson was faced with an impossible decision on January 2006
- His wife was suffering from severe cramps and seizures 25 weeks pregnant
- Mr Hutchinson chose to try and save both his wife and unborn daughter
- Erin was born at just 597 grams and was in intensive care for months
- His wife was in a coma for days after the emergency birth
- Her father credits the work of Children's Medical Research Institute

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A father has relived the moment he was forced to make the agonising decision to either save the life of his pregnant wife or his unborn child.

Faced with such a terrible choice, doctors offered Dean Hutchison one other option - to move them both to Sydney's Westmead Hospital for specialist treatment, but warned him there was only a 50-50 chance of either of them surviving.

He took the second option and thanks to the amazing care of doctors - and the fact little Erin, now eight, was a 'born little fighter', both of his loved ones lived.



A father has relived the moment he was forced to make a heartbreaking decision to save his unborn child or his wife

The couple's nightmare began in January 2006 when Kim Hutchison awoke feeling 'a bit off'. Unbeknownst to her, she was suffering from eclampsia.

They decided to drive to the hospital as a precaution but in a matter of seconds, Mrs Hutchison started screaming in agony in the car.

When they arrived at a Baulkham Hills hospital, the expectant mother started having seizures.

It was there medical staff asked Mr Hutchison to make one of the toughest decisions of his life.

'The doctors gave me two choices – stay at that hospital and save Kim but lose our baby, or risk moving them to Westmead Hospital to save them both, but with a 50/50 chance that neither of them would make it there,' he told Daily Mail Australia.



Mr Hutchinson took the risk and chose to try and save both his daughter and her mother, which presented only a 50-50 chance of survival for both of them



When Erin was born she weighed less than 600 grams, so small and fragile that her dad's wedding ring was too big for her arm



Today, Erin is a healthy eight-year-old and Mr Hutchinson says he is blessed to have both his girls by his side

'[When they told me] I actually did something that I thought only happened in movies, not in real life.

'I fell down and sat on the floor and I thought "I want both of them to live".

'I wanted both of them to have a chance, I couldn't imagine not having either of them.'

Finally, Mr Hutchison decided to make the trip to Westmead Hospital. Erin was only 597 grams when she was born at 25 weeks and spent her first few weeks in the world fighting for her life, while her mother was in a coma.

'For three days, I didn't know whether either of them would make it home,' Mr Hutchison said.

'[Erin] was given only a 5 per cent chance of surviving.



When Mrs Henderson was pregnant with Erin she was rushed to hospital with extreme cramps and seizures



She was given a five percent change of survival and spent months in neo-natal care



Mr Henderson, here with Erin at Christmas a few years ago, says the research done by the Children's Medical Research Institute saved his daughter's life

'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.'

It was during this time that Mr Hutchison saw first-hand the benefits of the work of the Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI) and a short while later he took up a job with the institute as their payroll officer.

'The research CMRI conducts finds direct answers to medical and genetic issues which also assist others researchers in other areas,' he said.

'Several times while I was at the neo-natal intensive care unit, I heard remarks from specialists and doctors about CMRI and the research they did that led to the oxygenation equipment, and the procedures and techniques used to help Erin see again.



She needed her retinas re-attaching in the early stages of her life, and thanks to the research doctors were able to restore her vision



Erin's mother was in a coma for the first few days of her daughter's life, but thankfully both pulled through the nightmare

'Part of the ordeal she was going through meant her retinas were detaching, without CMRI's research, it would have been unavoidable.

'They helped make some breakthroughs in those areas and led to a better result for Erin being able to maintain her vision.'

Mrs Hutchison was able to leave hospital 10 days later, but it was a tougher fight for Erin.

After almost three months in neo-natal intensive care, and a further four weeks in the special care unit, the brave little girl was finally able to go home.

To help families going through similar ordeals, Mr Hutchison has asked people to support CMRI by wearing denim on Jeans for Genes Day on Friday to raise money for their research and donate to their cause by visiting www.jeansforgenes.org.au.

'While I'm not connected in a research role, I'm happy to be a part that makes up this team,' he said.

'It's wonderful to know that these guys are working on such amazing and wonderful things.'



Jeans for Genes day is this Friday, August 1 and Mr Hutchinson has urged people to support the worthy cause
