



Harrison's Story

"Harrison was a happy, healthy little baby who loved his milk and gave out smiles to everyone that smiled at him. He had been born seven weeks premature, but was very strong and thrived as any healthy full term baby would.

At four and a half months of age, Harrison became sick with a cold. A couple of trips to the doctor resulted in antibiotics to clear a suspected infection. For a few days Harrison's condition began to improve, then suddenly he deteriorated and was admitted into North Shore Hospital (in Sydney, Australia) with pneumonia and hepatitis.

Four days of treatment and Harrison's condition failed to improve, his liver function was worsening. He was transferred to The Children's Hospital at Westmead for specialist care and diagnosis.

After five days of continuing tests and consultation by a number of specialists, our family was informed that Harrison had Severe Combined Immune Deficiency, a lack of immune system resulting in him being defenceless against viruses and infections.

We were advised that the only hope for his survival was a bone marrow transplant and there was a chance that Harrison was too sick to make it to the transplant. He was found not only to have pneumonia caused by a virus and a fungus, but also widespread infection caused by a virus called EBV. This is the same virus that can cause glandular fever, but was causing Harrison to be very ill with hepatitis.

Harrison's condition continued to deteriorate, and two days later he was transferred to Intensive Care where upon arrival he had a massive lung haemorrhage and stopped breathing. He was placed on a ventilator and our family were told that due to the extensive damage to multiple organs caused by the infections, we had to say goodbye to our darling baby. Only two weeks after being admitted to Hospital, and only two days shy of being 6 months old, little Harrison died.

The grief from this loss is heartbreaking, particularly in such preventable circumstances. We have to live with the knowledge that a Newborn Screening test could have detected Harrison's condition at birth and allowed him to access treatment that could have saved his life".