

DEFIBRILLATION

Herald Sun, Tuesday, April 20, 2004 www.heraldsun.com.au 11

Late arrivals break paramedics' hearts

Deaths due to growing demand

CHOKING back tears, a MICA paramedic has told how he witnessed two deaths in the past six months because his ambulance was too late.

"It is too upsetting. You walk away and you know it's not fair," he said. "You can't say anything to the family. Part of you feels guilty, but there's really nothing you can do."

"You think 'that poor family, you didn't get a fair chance. If only it had been another night.'"

Paramedics estimate at least 50 desperately ill Victorians died last year because crews couldn't reach them in time.

Three paramedics interviewed by the Herald Sun blamed increasing demand, believed to be growing at 10 per cent a week, and a lack of resources.

Paula Besschamp
health reporter

"When it's the job you are racing to, it's heart-wrenching."

A paramedic instructor based in Melbourne's outer suburbs said he worried for his own family.

"If someone in my family has a cardiac arrest, I can only hope an ambulance reaches them within eight minutes or less. After 12 minutes there's not much paramedics can do," he said.

"For every minute delay there's a big increase in the risk that person will die."

"In my heart, I don't have that confidence in the service any more."

He said paramedics across Melbourne had to face angry family and friends after arriving late on jobs.

People are getting an



Under the pumps paramedic crews say they can't help being late. Picture: TREVOR PINDER

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) strikes around 30,000 people in Australia each year. Sadly, fewer than 5% survive, often because the Ambulance Service does not reach them in time, particularly in the crowded City centre.

Survival rates fall by around 10 per cent for every minute of delay from collapse to defibrillation. The sooner a heart attack victim gets emergency assistance, the better their chance of recovery. A victim's best chance of surviving SCA is to receive a "shock" from a defibrillator within a few minutes of collapse.

Schiller Fred® Easyport® Defibrillator

“The World’s First Pocket Defibrillator.”

Easy-to-Use – 1. Call 000. 2. Start CPR (2 Breaths & 30 Chest Compressions).
3. Turn on the Defibrillator. 4. Apply Defibrillator Pads. 5. Follow Defibrillator Prompts.



- Light – only 490 grams, incl. batteries.
- Compact – 133 mm x 126 mm x 35mm.

Schiller is a world leader in the design of Defibrillators. This recently released Swiss defibrillator is a low cost, “pocket sized” product. :

- ◇ Waveform – biphasic multipulse defibrillation.
- ◇ Battery – lithium, 5 years shelf life, 60shocks capacity.
- ◇ Energy – escalating shock – 90 joule first shock.
- ◇ Voice Instructions – tells the operator what to do.