

## New tool makes cast removal less scary

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By Ed Stannard, Register Metro Editor

NEW HAVEN — The pain of a broken bone and an itchy, stiff cast is something an active youngster can relate to, but who thinks about having to get that cast sawed off?

"It's just very scary for young children in particular," said Dr. Brian Smith, director of pediatric orthopedics at Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital.

The oscillating teeth of the saw, accompanied by a sound like a high-powered drill, are no fun at all.

Now though, armed with a \$4,995 grant from the Ronald McDonald House Charities, the Yale School of Medicine has a new machine that looks like a drill, but sounds like a hair dryer on the low setting. It looks a lot less scary, too.

"There's no dust, no noise, no cutting or burning your patients," said Bonnie Goff, product manager for OrthoPediatrics Corp., the Warsaw, Ind., company that developed the Quiet Cast Removal System.

"I think I personally took for granted what having a cast removed means," said Pattie McKnight, president of the board of Ronald McDonald House in New Haven and a member of the charity's board. "I started to hear that it was uncomfortable for them, scary for them."

Dr. Gary Friedlaender, chief of orthopedic rehabilitation at the medical school and the hospital, agreed that "it's extremely stressful on family and kids to go through these processes, even though the outcome is going to be good."

The machine, which is the size of a large drill and battery-operated, actually propels itself along the cast as it slices the plaster and underlying gauze.

Emily Sheehan, 12, of Old Saybrook volunteered to demonstrate the device recently after another child balked. She was at the doctors' office to have her broken left elbow checked — she broke it when she fell during a gymnastics maneuver — but she volunteered to have a cast put on her right wrist.

"It sort of tickled; it didn't really hurt," said Emily after her bright pink cast was cut off. Her mother, Lisa Sheehan, said Emily had been disappointed that she didn't get a cast for her elbow.

"She ended up getting what she wanted," Lisa Sheehan said.

Not only that, but Ronald McDonald autographed it for her.



The Ronald McDonald House Charities of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts donated the money needed for the Yale School of Medicine Dept. of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation to purchase a OrthoPediatrics Quiet Cast Removal System to use on pediatric patients. Pattie McKnight of North Haven, board member of the Charities, left, watches as Emily Sheehan, 12, of Old Saybrook was a guinea pig in showing how the cast is removed by Dr. Brian Smith. Sheehan had a cast put on and removed for the demonstration. Photo by Mara Lavitt