



No child has ever shown up in sunglasses and sandals for a CT scan, but it wouldn't be a bad idea. After all, sea grass sprouts on the walls of the procedure room, ducks dangle from the ceiling, and a sand castle sprawls across the scanner's giant gantry.

A kite flutters overhead. Brightly colored pails sit invitingly atop the "beach." Sailboats tack and jib in the distance. And all of it is so magical and relaxing that children can sometimes forget they're about to undergo what could be an otherwise unsettling experience.

As in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET), undergoing a CT scan involves lying still on a moving table that positions the body correctly within the doughnut-like hole of the machine's gantry. Although technologists, nurses, and child life specialists are clever at distracting and calming their young patients, technical director Linda Poznauskis decided something more was needed. Inspired by the example of a Florida hospital and with funding from the radiologists, she decided to turn the exam room into a beach.

The department hired art consultant Crystal Duell, who commissioned Mark Hunt to paint the seaside vistas onto canvases that will soon enliven the corridors. DGI Invisuals enlarged and transferred the paintings onto a washable, fire-resistant 3M product that was applied like wallpaper to the walls of the exam room and gantry. Pretty soon the entire staff was in on the project.

"It was a great team-building process," said Poznauskis. "Projects like this give you a sense of accomplishment because you make the children happy, you please the families, and you give the staff something to focus on that's fun and positive and productive."

"Our engineer, Tony Pinto, was able to figure out where the ducks should be placed so when the fan on the machine is going, the ducks fly in unison," Poznauskis explained. Pinto is currently fiddling with the kite on the ceiling in the hope of making its colorful tail twist and turn.

Distractions like these can make all the difference with young patients, often commanding their attention long enough to avoid the need for sedation. "We implemented the new décor and the faster machine at the same time," said Poznauskis. "Certainly we know that the faster machine helps us with less sedation, but we also believe that when a child walks into the room, he or she is feeling like it's a friendly environment right off. If a child doesn't feel comfortable, you're lost. This enables us to take advantage of the machine's capability."

Sedation rates have dropped from a monthly average of 46 patients during the five months before the machine came on line last July to an average of 31 patients in the five months after.

"We hear from patients all the time that they love it," she said, noting that the staff is already dreaming up a Fenway Park motif for the room that will hold the new 64-slice scanner. Even Chief Technologist Richard Cappock, a diehard Yankees fan, is in on the planning.

Surf's Up!

