

# Medical clip wins praise worldwide



Doctor Jeff Hooper, inventors Eileen and Neil Stead, and Michael Fletcher, and paramedic Brad Solomon ● Picture: Kit de Guymer

by Melissa Townsend

AN internationally acclaimed device to minimise medication errors developed by three Gold Coast paramedics has been adopted by CareFlight.

Michael Fletcher and Eileen and Neil Stead spent seven years developing the 'check clip' using their combined medical expertise.

The invention hooks an ampoule to a syringe, reducing medication errors and protecting paramedics from the exposed sharp edges of the ampoule. It also clearly reveals important medical information.

Emergency physician Michael Sinnott, whose company Qlicksmart endorsed the invention and bought the intellectual property, said the 'check clip' was efficient.

"Many years ago, what we'd do was write on the syringe or use colour-coded labels, but that method is prone to errors," said Dr Sinnott.

"In an emergency situation, messing around with tape or labels can be time-consuming.

"If you have a syringe in one hand and an ampoule in the other, you have to put one down to label it, but with this device you simply clip the two together."

As simple as it may sound, the device is the first of its kind and has received international acclaim.

In 2006, it was nominated as

being among the top 20 world inventions at the 2006 Emergency Medical Expo in Las Vegas.

Dr Sinnott said medication errors were a massive problem in Australia and overseas.

"There are 140,000 preventable deaths in US hospitals each year from adverse drug events," he said.

"An equivalent number occur in Australia and other Western countries, with approximately 10 to 20 per cent of these deaths due to 'syringe swap' or 'ampoule swap' errors, where the drug given to the patient is not the intended drug or not in the intended dose."

According to Mr Fletcher, the idea came to him in the shower.

"Instead of singing I started thinking about it in the shower because I knew there was a need for some sort of labelling improvement," he said.

"It started out as basic piece of cardboard with a few screws but Neil, Eileen and I worked with industrial designers and it just evolved from there."

After several knockbacks, the inventors approached Qlicksmart and soon they were on their way to success.

The device is now being sold and distributed overseas and has been adopted by the Northern Territory Ambulance Service.