

## HEALTH

# A role to get the blood pumping

**T**he electrocardiogram, which measures and records the electrical activity of the heart, is one of the more basic procedures a cardiac technologist performs, MonashHeart cardiac technologist Julie Banks says. It is also the procedure she performed for her most recent patient.

She says doing so involved applying stickers to the patient's chest, connecting those stickers to cables and taking a reading of the patient's heart rhythm.

"The patient [an infant] was in the special-care nursery and was five weeks premature," Banks says. "So we were just looking for any abnormal rhythms."

Banks began as a cardiac technologist at MonashHeart in 2008. She says the aim of her role is to provide best-possible outcomes for patients by conducting tests to identify what is happening with their heart conditions.

"I was working for MonashHeart as a nurse but I'd always found the work the cardiac technologists did

fascinating. Seeing these heart rhythms and signals moving across the screen and really having minimal idea of what they were, but seeing this individual that understood entirely what they were seeing, I thought I'd like to be somebody who could analyse something so intricately."

To become a cardiac technologist, Banks completed a graduate diploma of science (cardiac technology) at Swinburne University. Now she is on the cusp of finishing another graduate diploma, in electrophysiology.

She says having these qualifications enables her to perform a more autonomous and specialised role. "If you want to further yourself and have more of a challenge, then it's up to you to seek out further education."

Banks is mainly stationed at the MonashHeart Clayton site, which provides a wide range of services, including exercise stress testing, adult and paediatric echocardiography and home



A good heart ... Julie Banks conducts various tests and sees up to 50 patients a day.

monitoring. She is involved in the provision of most of these services and can see up to 50 patients a day, depending on the duration and complexity of the tests.

Although it was the technical aspect that piqued her interest in cardiac technology, Banks says the patient relationships are a big drawcard of the job too. "We can help treat them and find answers so they come in with a problem and go out healthy. It's a very positive part of the hospital to be in."

Banks recalls her experience with one patient who lost her farm and home in bushfires a few years ago. The patient, who had recently had an internal cardiac defibrillator

fitted, was hooked up to a remote-monitoring device that sends messages back to MonashHeart. She had been experiencing palpitations under the stress of the aftermath of the bushfires and came into MonashHeart "almost hysterical", fearing that her devices had been impaired by the bushfires.

It turned out the home monitor was adversely affected by the heat of the bushfires and MonashHeart was able to replace it.

"We were able to reassure her," Banks says. "Although she'd lost everything in her life, she felt it was material and that at least she still had her health."

Thanks to the ever-evolving

**SALARY** Southern Health advises salaries for cardiac technologists recently out of university begin at \$877 a week and increase to \$1621 for experienced technologists.

**PATHWAYS** Junior cardiac technologists start out learning basic ECG interpretation and move on to basic non-invasive physiology tests. The next step is to learn how to set up and run equipment used during emergency heart attacks, perform lifesaving techniques and support cardiologists while they perform angiograms and place stents. Technologists then have the option of specialising in cardiac rhythm management, electrophysiology or echocardiography.

**RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS** A basic science degree.

**LINK**  
[monashheart.org.au](http://monashheart.org.au)

nature of cardiac technology, she says her work is something she can see herself doing for the rest of her career. "I'm hoping to continue to provide excellent care and to challenge myself with the new technology that comes up. I want to keep furthering my knowledge and I see myself at MonashHeart for a very long time because it's the centre in Melbourne that can provide this for me."

**JOSH JENNINGS**

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