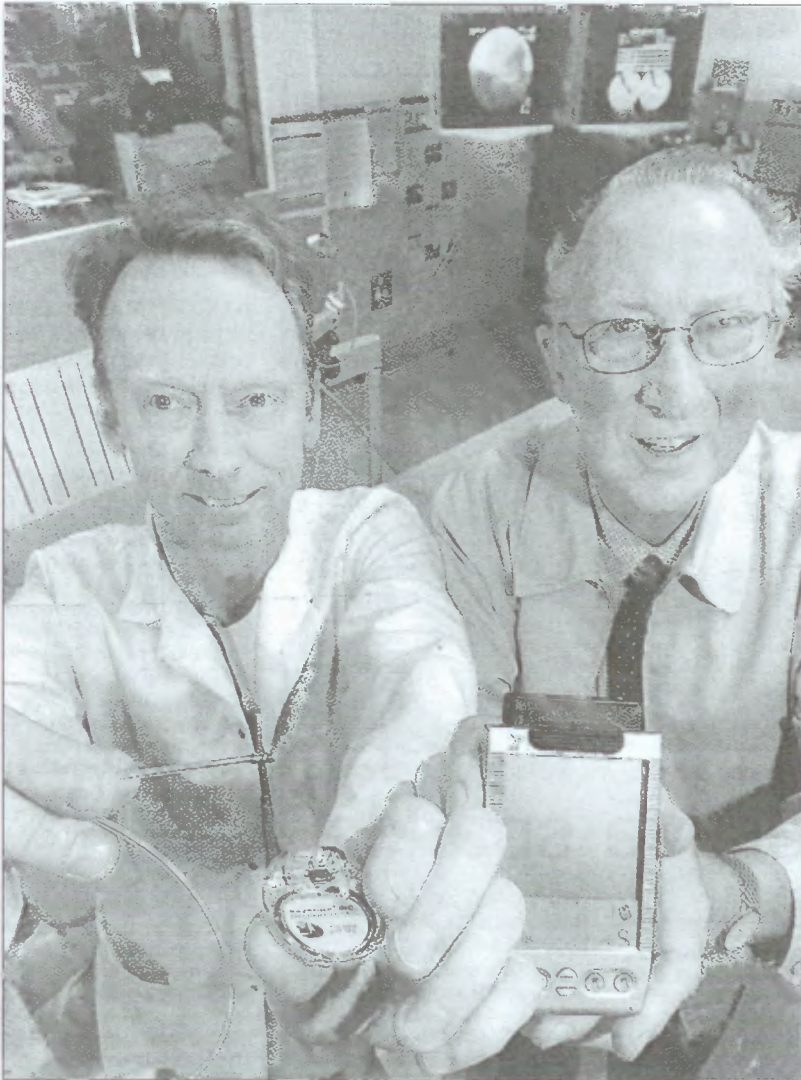


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# Pumped about new heart aid



**Smart implant:** researcher Dr Tony Walton, left, with heart patient Ian Gunst, and right, the two parts of the HeartPOD device. Pictures: JAY TOWN

## Kate Jones

medical reporter

IT may not play top 40 hits, but the HeartPOD moves to a strong beat.

The tiny device monitors the pressure inside a patient's heart and alerts them when more or less medication is needed.

For heart patient Ian Gunst, 74, the monitoring system means fewer trips to hospital and more time with his 10 grandchildren.

The HeartPOD is implanted in the patient's left atrium and connected to a device at the hip by a thin electrical wire inserted in the groin.

A sensor system in the device sends information to a hand-held computer, which looks much like a palm pilot.

Four Australians, including Mr Gunst, and 12 in New Zealand and the US have been implanted with the device as part of a world-first study.

The study's chief researcher, Prof Henry Krum, helps patients adjust their medication without seeing their doctor or having to go to hospital.

"I think it's a paradigm for where health care is heading in the future, with patients having been diagnosed with a condition and a careful management plan laid out, but part of that plan includes self-management," Prof Krum said.

Fellow researcher Dr Tony Walton said the device could also warn patients of a worsening heart condition.

