

# Sick Kids patient had 31 surgeries

From page 1.

she said.

Mr. Harper had nothing but compliments for her. "O'Brien played a good game. Impressive goaltending," he said.

The air hockey table replaces a worn-out one in Marnie's Lounge, which is an entertainment area with video and board games as well as computers and movies.

"Playing hockey in any form - ice, ball and table - is a Canadian tradition and a great way for kids to connect with each other," Mr. Harper said.

Kaitlyn, who suffers from VACTERL, has been a patient at Sick Kids her entire life. She's had 31 surgeries.

"With all my medical issues, it's hard to stay on top of things (at school) but I manage to do it somehow," she said.

VACTERL is a non-random association of birth defects. Each letter stands for one or more malformations. People with VACTERL have normal intelligence, but may have delayed growth and development in their early years.

V - vertebral anomalies

A - anal atresia, the anus does not open to the outside of the body

C - cardiac defect

T - tracheoesophageal fistula - abnormal connection between the windpipe and esophagus, which is the food tube to the stomach

E - esophageal atresia - esophagus does not connect to the stomach

R - renal defects

L - limb abnormalities



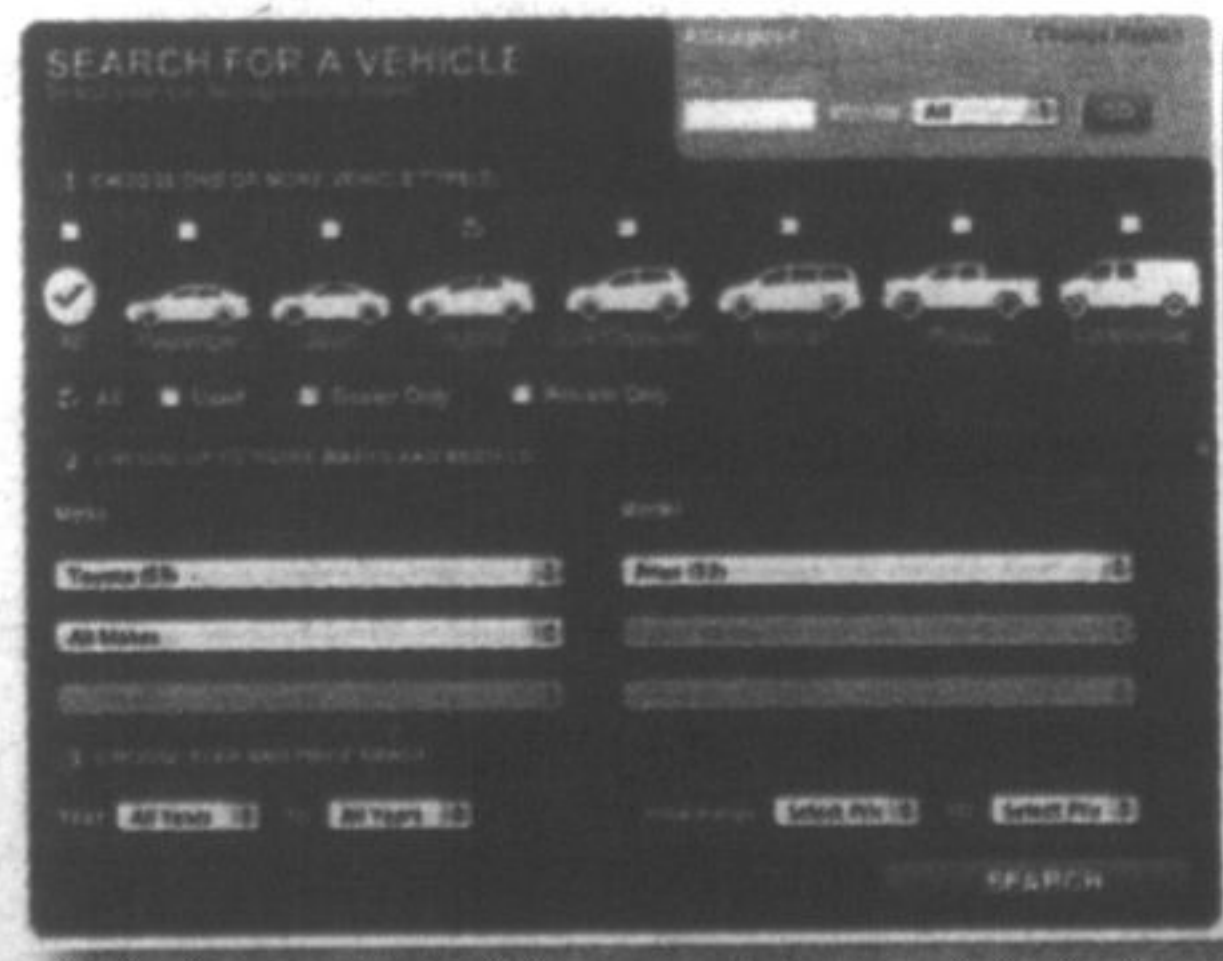
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE PHOTO

Prime Minister Stephen Harper plays a quick game of air hockey with Kaitlyn O'Brien, 14, of Stouffville Saturday. They are playing on a table Mr. Harper donated to the patients at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

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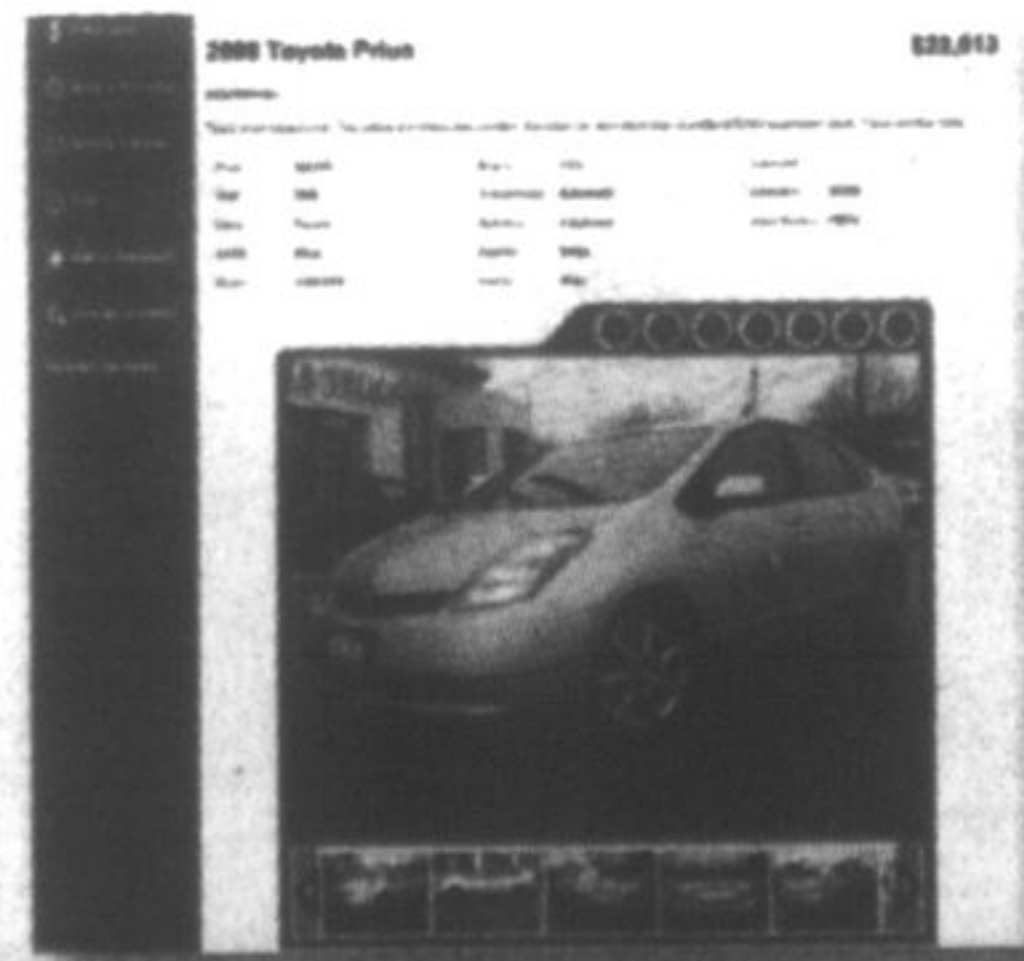
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