



# Chest cam in cancer fight

## Procedure may boost survival rate

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MEDICAL REPORTER

AUSTRALIA-first surgery has given Hervey Bay woman June Cavanaugh a better chance of recovering from ovarian cancer, a specialist doctor says.

Ms Cavanaugh was diagnosed with advanced ovarian cancer just before Christmas.

Earlier this month, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital surgeons removed the cancer, which had spread to her chest cavity, in a procedure believed to have only previously been attempted in the US.

Gynaecological cancer specialist Andreas Obermair, who performed the operation with thoracic surgeon Morgan Windsor, said that before

seeing the procedure in New York recently, he would not have attempted to remove the secondary cancer in Ms Cavanaugh's chest cavity.

"We would have given up," he said bluntly. "It's a change of mindset.

"We are less and less prepared to accept defeat.

"June had so much cancer in the chest that I don't think anyone would have thought before the surgery that it could possibly be done. But we've done it.

"I'm very confident to say her chances of survival are a lot better. Not a little bit better - a lot better."

Dr Windsor removed Ms Cavanaugh's chest tumours via a procedure known as video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery, which involves the insertion of a tiny camera to guide the surgeon.

Professor Obermair, of the Queensland Centre for Gynaecological Cancer, then stepped in, performing a radical hysterectomy, removing the uterus, ovaries and

cervix.

Ms Cavanaugh, who will also need to undergo chemotherapy, said she was "shocked" when she was told she had ovarian cancer.

"I just had vague symptoms. I had abdominal bloating. I thought: 'I'm retired and sitting in front of the computer too much'," the grandmother of seven said.

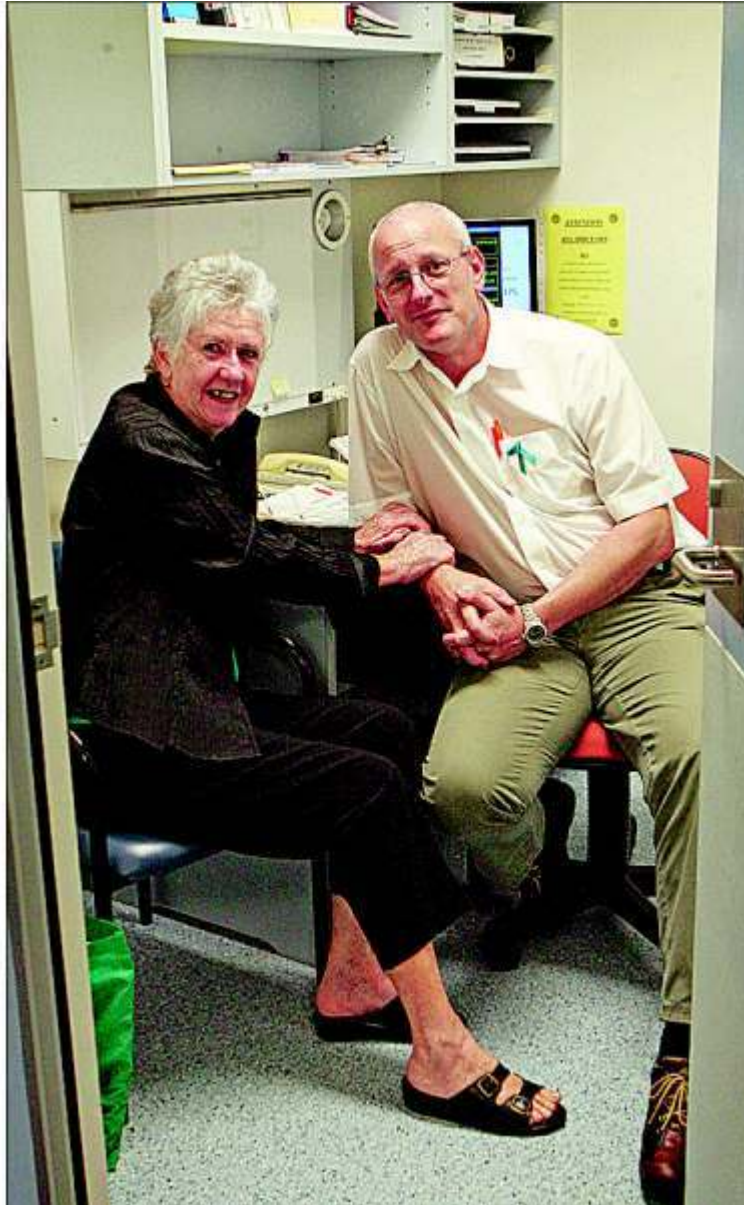
"And I had low tummy pains, just like period pains. I thought: 'This is stupid. I don't get them anymore'.

"The only thing I can say to other ladies is: 'Know your own body. If it doesn't feel right, go and get it checked out'."

Prof Obermair hopes to gain research funding to further study the procedure in ovarian cancer patients.

In 2006, 238 Queensland women were diagnosed with ovarian cancer and 131 died from the disease.

February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.



**TUMOURS REMOVED:** Gynaecological cancer specialist Andreas Obermair with patient June Cavanaugh. **Picture: Sarah Marshall**