

Seek & destroy

It's a first! South Africa's own ground-breaking cancer procedure for inoperable lung tumours recently made history at Mediclinic Panorama.

A fresh weapon in the fight against cancer is always good news, so it was a proud moment when a procedure that will revolutionise the treatment of inoperable lung and liver tumours was performed at Mediclinic Panorama.

It was a Saturday like any other but 9 April was anything but that for specialist surgeon Dr Jonathan Leith, who practises at Mediclinic Panorama. He performed a new procedure to destroy a lung tumour – the Accu2i percutaneous microwave tissue ablation (pMTA) – for the first time in South Africa.

While retired computer salesman Clive Lynch was being prepared for the final treatment under general anaesthetic, all his wife, Trish, was happy about was that traditional surgery was not needed. During ablation a 1,8 mm-wide needle-like device is skilfully guided to the centre of the tumour with the assistance of a CT scanner. It then heats the cells to a precise temperature and destroys the cancerous tissue. Trish says her husband reported afterwards that he had a bit of discomfort, which he said felt like a burn. 'Dr Leith had warned him he would experience this.'

Five minutes later the process was over.

'A NEW ARROW IN OUR QUIVER'

Up to this moment, in addition to the more traditional surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, doctors could use radio frequency ablation (RFA) to destroy

tumours. But the new therapy allows Dr Leith to tackle larger tumours and to perform the procedure far quicker. This treatment can also be repeated if new tumours develop.

'It's a very exciting breakthrough,' says Dr Leith. 'It gives us a new arrow in our quiver when we treat cancer, and it means we can do more. It's going to change the way we treat many things.'

And how was Clive doing after the operation? 'The procedure went very well,' says Trish. 'He struggled a bit with the drain in his lungs, which he found uncomfortable, but breathed without difficulty.'

'We are constantly looking at new ways to improve health care,' says Mediclinic Panorama's hospital manager, George Harris, pleased with the conclusion of the successful event. 'As a larger hospital we are proud to be able to offer patients specialist care and new treatments that improve clinical outcomes.' ●



Regular revolutionary: Dr Jonathan Leith has made history with new lung-tumour surgery at Mediclinic Panorama.

TACKLING TUMOURS

The ablation procedure is mainly used on tumours that can't be removed surgically – either the patient is too ill for surgery or has had surgery on one lung already. The second lung can now be treated without invasive surgery by microwave energy to destroy the tumour. This technique can also be used on certain inoperable liver, kidney and bone tumours. It means that, while surgery remains the most effective way to remove malignant tumours, there's an added option for the treatment of patients who are more severely ill.

For many, the procedure involves only an overnight stay and because it's far less invasive, although not altogether pain-free, recovery is far quicker.