

**Issued 16 January 2012**

## **Cabrini's ICU survivors celebrate a second chance at life**

"Out of this world" is how patient James (Jim) Rankin described the care he and his family received during a 25-day stay in Cabrini Malvern's intensive care unit (ICU) in mid-2011.

It's also an apt description for the vivid dreams and visions he experienced while he was in a coma for some 30 days.

Jim is one of 18 long-stay patients who will be celebrating their second chance at life at a gathering of patients, their families, doctors, other ICU staff and donors being held at Cabrini Malvern on Tuesday 24 January 2012 from 2.30-4.30 pm in the Terrace Café function room.

"Each of these patients has a story to tell," said Dr John Reeves, Director, ICU, Cabrini Health. "Each of them has walked the long, white corridor and is lucky to be alive today."

Cabrini Health has completed a study on the quality of life in patients who have undergone a long admission in our ICU (more than 21 days). The study has enabled Cabrini Health to better inform patients and their families about likely outcomes following a long stay in ICU.

"Prolonged admissions in an intensive care unit are burdensome to patients, families, healthcare workers and the community," said Dr Reeves. "There is a concern that such treatment may be futile and that patients who survive long admissions in ICU experience a poor quality of life afterward – our study has shown that this is not the case."

Two-thirds of patients who went home after a long admission in ICU returned to a reasonably normal quality of life, according to Cabrini Health's study.

"These encouraging results reassure our staff that their care of these long term patients is beneficial, vindicating the great efforts undertaken to help them recover," said Dr Reeves.

Cabrini Health's current ICU (established 2003) cares for approximately 1410 patients every year. Its patients are the sickest of the sick, requiring around-the-clock monitoring and care.

### **Patient case study**

Jim, 73, is a retired import textile agent who travelled extensively for work. Now his lifestyle is based closer to home in Carrum Downs and it was there that he contracted an infection through a lesion in his skin that affected his heart, while clearing away bushes at his property. The infection left him feeling "freezing cold" but with few other symptoms.

While Jim has little personal recollection of his time in hospital, he knows he underwent surgery to replace an aortic valve in his heart following a previous operation in 2007.

"I should have been dead – it's an absolute miracle and I cannot thank the staff at Cabrini Health for what they did for me and how they treated my family," said Jim.

Nowadays, Jim says he is "in the pink". He has maintained a healthy weight, eats well, walks 5 km a day and performs daily exercises using light handweights as part of his rehabilitation.

Jim has plenty of living to do yet: four adult children and eight grandchildren keep Jimmy and his wife Patricia “pretty busy”. He has had a long involvement with the RSL and enjoys a game of golf.

### **Findings from Cabrini Health’s study of long-stay ICU patients**

Dr Geetha Plandran, a final year medical student on elective rotation in ICU, with the approval of the Cabrini Human Research Ethics Committee, surveyed 22 long stay ICU patients about their quality of life after their discharge home. All but one former patient was still living in their own homes.

“We gathered data on patients admitted to our ICU (which now numbers approximately 3500) since July 2008,” said Dr Reeves.

“The results were interesting and encouraging: most former patients described themselves as ‘perfectly well’, nine people had no problems walking about, 12 had some difficulty with mobility and one was confined to bed.

“A similar pattern was evident in the other activities of daily life such as housework, family and leisure activities. It was also reflected in the incidence of pain, discomfort, anxiety and depression: nine patients reported that they felt normal; 12 had experienced mild problems and one had severe problems.

“Faced with the same illness again, most of these patients said they would choose ICU for their care.”

### **Photo opportunities**

A thanksgiving celebration for long-stay survivors of critical illness is being held at Cabrini Malvern on Tuesday 24 January 2012 from 2.30-4.30 pm in the Terrace Café function room.

***Media is invited to meet the patients and ICU staff (including doctors and nurses) who made their recovery possible.***

### **About Cabrini Health**

Cabrini Health is a Catholic private, not-for-profit health service provided from seven sites in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Founded in 1948, it is owned by the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We have 3850 staff, 180 volunteers, 1225 specialist doctors and 832 inpatient beds. Our services span aged care, cancer care, cardiac services, emergency medicine, health promotion, home-based care, maternity services, paediatric services, palliative care, rehabilitation, research and education.

### **Media information**

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