

Lung Cancer Awareness Month: Brian's Story



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73 year-old Brian Flynn loves a beer, his family and the St Kilda Football Club. The former industrial cleaner was close to retirement when first diagnosed with lung cancer five years ago. He had been a heavy smoker as a younger man, and was originally diagnosed after doctors investigated the source of his chest pain.

After months of treatment, this father of four and grandfather of four was confident he'd beaten the disease, but a routine scan recently revealed his cancer - Small Cell Lung Cancer - was back.

“It was horrible,” he says now. “I thought I was in the clear. I had never heard of this type of cancer before I got it, so I read up about it. It’s a difficult one to eradicate.”

Around 12,000 Australians are diagnosed with lung cancer every year and Small Cell Lung Cancer accounts for around 15% of cases.

This disease usually begins in the middle of the lungs and spreads more quickly than non-small cell lung cancer.

Lung cancer symptoms may include shortness of breath, voice changes including hoarseness, chest pain, coughing or spitting up blood, a new cough that does not go away or recurring bronchitis or pneumonia. Some patients notice enlarged fingertips, a loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss or tiredness.

Brian is now undergoing treatment with a new therapy every three weeks. He believes new medicine and new options offer hope.

“As long as you are kicking, there is always something new coming out all the time,” says. “That give me hope.”

And while he is not sure what the future holds, he knows what he is looking forward to: a trip to Brisbane, where two of his sons and two grandchildren reside.

“I spend half my time back in Brisbane, and I want to get up there again,” Brian says. “They keep you going.

“I have got one son still at home and we have a couple of beers together, especially if the football is on. I also have my daughter here in Melbourne, and two grandkids.

“What do I miss? I miss going to the pub!

“I think it will be after Christmas before the borders get open. That’s what I am looking forward to.

“You have to fight ... I am not ready to give up the ghost right now.”

***Brian shared his experience in October 2020.**