

Beating Lung Cancer

Take it easy? Not a chance

"I'M A PRETTY TOUGH, 72-year-old French woman," says Theresa Morrisette with a chuckle. "I grew up with no electricity and worked hard every day of my life. I start to go crazy if I have to sit still for very long."

That busy life kept Morrisette up and agile, but it also took its toll on her joints. In the fall of 2009, she decided it was time to do something about the pain and stiffness in her knees. "I was having an examination to prepare for surgery on my knees when something unexpected showed up," Morrisette explains. "It turns out that God works in mysterious ways. In the end I was very, very glad I decided to have that checkup."

Testing, Testing

During a routine preoperative CT scan, suspicious spots were found on both of Morrisette's lungs. Further testing identified two different lung cancers, one fast and one slow-growing.

"We wanted to surgically address both cancers as quickly as possible, to reduce the likelihood and rate of possible spread," recalls cardiothoracic surgeon Samer Kanaan, M.D. "But we were concerned that Morrisette's age and the fact that both lungs needed surgical treatment might make it difficult to act quickly."

A multidisciplinary team of cardiothoracic surgeons, oncologists, nurses and other clinicians worked together to develop an aggressive yet realistic treatment plan including surgery, chemotherapy and rehabilitation. "Using the Queen's minimally invasive technology we were able to surgically address first one, and then the second cancer, within a brief, six-week period," Dr. Kanaan says. "Using older, 'open' procedures, the recovery time between surgeries would have been much longer and Ms. Morrisette's cancer might have spread further."



Samer Kanaan, M.D.



Theresa Morrisette

"For the first procedure I was in the hospital for just three days," Morrisette recalls. "They went in between my ribs and didn't do too much damage. I was in the hospital for six days for the second, more extensive procedure."

Positive Thoughts

Morrisette suspects that her attitude has a lot to do with her quick recovery. "I think the nurses may have gotten tired of hearing me say I wanted to go home. But they were always very nice about it," she says. "I mostly just did what the doctors and nurses told me and took it easy. Now I'm feeling like my old self again."

She didn't take it "too" easy, though. Between her two lung surgeries, Morrisette remarkably found the energy to slip on her kneepads and lay a brand new, wood floor in her living room, dining room and family room. "I told you I'm tough," she laughs again. "It's not that hard. The pieces are all there and you just tap them in place. I told you ... I go crazy if I have to just sit still." ♣