

## Bureaucrats blamed for cancer delay

Kate Bastians, The West Australian November 22, 2012, 5:50 am

A Perth man is worse off after being forced to go to NSW for life-saving cancer surgery because the procedure is not done any more in WA.

After five months on the waiting list at St George Hospital, the fast-spreading cancer had destroyed most of Chris Lewkowski's bowel before his peritonectomy surgery.

Surgeon David Morris, from St George Hospital, said the delay decreased the 67-year-old's chances of beating the cancer. "I would say his chances would be 25 per cent now at best and had he been done earlier, it could have been considerably better," Professor Morris said.

Mr Lewkowski lost more of his bowel than if the surgery was done sooner.

Professor Morris said patients had died waiting for the surgery and the cancer progressed so far in others it was inoperable. He said a peritonectomy unit was needed in every State.

The WA Health Department plans to reinstate the surgery at Fremantle Hospital in six to 12 months.

It is understood it stopped in November 2010 when surgeon Paul Moroz quit in frustration because he could not convince the department to set up a full-time unit.

Professor Moroz moved to Joondalup and has offered to do the surgery there but the department says the procedure is complicated, needs multidisciplinary teams and support and cannot be done at Joondalup.

AMA WA president Richard Choong said the department should have taken up the offer given Professor Moroz had the capabilities and the hospital's backing.

Instead it sent patients to NSW.

In the past year, 15 WA patients were sent to NSW for peritonectomy-related care with the department covering the surgery, chemotherapy, flights and accommodation.

Shadow health minister Roger Cook said the patients would not have to go to NSW if the Government backed a dedicated unit.

"The whole issue of peritonectomy is bureaucratic stubbornness defying common sense," he said.

"The Government has been offered a sensible, straightforward solution for patients to have the operation in Joondalup near their families and the Government has refused for no good, no commonsense reason."