

A gut feeling about cancer

BY TRISTAN MADDOCKS
22 Jun, 2010 12:00 AM

A BOWEL cancer patient at Ringwood Private Hospital wants to raise awareness of the disease and highlight the fact it can affect people aged under 50.

Speaking shortly after Bowel Cancer Awareness week, which ran from June 6-13, Dianne Rogers told the Journal her experience had been an eye-opener.

The 46-year-old Upwey resident had a tumour removed on December 18 after two weeks of illness.

The tumour was picked up by a CT scan after Ms Rogers sought treatment for what she thought was a more minor complaint. "I thought I had gastro for two weeks and it ended up being bowel cancer," she said.

Statistics show one in 12 Australians will develop bowel cancer before the age of 85.

Ms Rogers said the profile for breast cancer and some other diseases was high in Australia, but she did not know a thing about bowel cancer before her diagnosis.

"I think the scary part was that I was so sick, and ate healthily, and you just don't think it can happen to you I suppose."

After six months of chemotherapy, Ms Rogers wanted to challenge the stereotype associated with the treatment.

"I still work, and I'm still walking five kilometres a week. I try to exercise three to four times a week. I thought everybody lost their hair but it hasn't affected mine."

She said she maintained an active social life despite her fortnightly treatments.

Ringwood Private Hospital's director of nursing Sue Hewat said Ms Rogers was one of several patients aged in their forties to have been recently treated for bowel cancer at the hospital.

She said that although a change in daily bowel movement patterns was not a cause for panic, people should speak to their doctor about it. There were also ways to monitor one's bowel health.

"We think it's really important people take up the government's bowel cancer screening kits," Ms Hewat said. There have been patients we have treated who were detected through the kits."



Speaking out: Dianne Rogers is recovering from a battle with bowel cancer. Picture: Wayne Hawkins