



## **\*\*\*Media release\*\*\***

### **Innovative spinal surgery performed at Austin Health**

Doctors at Austin Health performed ground-breaking surgery to remove a large tumour dangerously wrapped around a patient's spine. David Ceravolo, 47 year-old father of three, had as little as 3 weeks left before becoming a paraplegic. Dr Gerald Quan, orthopaedic surgeon, knew time was of the essence, given the severity of Mr Ceravolo's chondrosarcoma, a rare form of cartilage cancer.

The cancer, resistant to chemotherapy and radiation, had returned after a previous operation, this time growing more rapidly and aggressively in and around Mr Ceravolo's spine. Dr Quan and his team performed two life-saving operations over the course of four days, giving Mr Ceravolo time to recover in between.

Roughly the size of an orange and located in the middle of his chest, the tumour had wrapped itself around Mr Ceravolo's spine and was pushing on the spinal cord. Dr Quan cut through two ribs to extract the tumour from Mr Ceravolo's spine, at the same time removing two vertebrae on which the spine was attached to prevent the cancer from returning. Mr Ceravolo's spine is now supported by two metal rods screwed into his spine, and a titanium cage replacing the two missing vertebrae.

Dr Quan said Mr Ceravolo has every chance of being cured of cancer. "I owe him my life" said Mr Ceravolo.

This innovative spinal surgery performed at Austin Health is the first of its kind in Melbourne.