



ST GEORGE'S HOSPITAL

A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE



Rare, life-saving spinal surgery undertaken at St George's

The complex surgery to remove a spinal tumour impacting the heart and lungs of a 34-year-old mum of four was performed by a multi-disciplinary team of specialists, led by spinal orthopaedic surgeon Mr Kris Dalzell.

The patient had a nagging pain near her shoulder blade, but as a busy mum co-running a working dairy farm outside the Canterbury region she put it down to general back strain. As the pain intensified and her body became less responsive to pain medication, she opted

to see a specialist, who diagnosed her with a benign but aggressive tumour in her back.

Her case was referred to spinal orthopaedic surgeon Kris Dalzell.

"Because the tumour was growing alongside the patient's two thoracic vertebrae and two ribs, it was impacting her heart and lungs," says Mr Dalzell.

"To remove the tumour, we needed a team of 10 specialists, along with a neurosurgeon on stand-by. We knew we needed to use St George's as it's the only hospital in Canterbury with the necessary technology and support to undertake such a complex surgery."

After an intense period of tests and planning, Mr Dalzell led the 14-hour surgery and utilised the skills of two spinal orthopaedic surgeons, two anaesthetists, two plastic surgeons,



Top image: Spinal orthopaedic surgeon Mr Kris Dalzell and team in surgery. Above: Mr Kris Dalzell.

two tumour surgeons, a cardiothoracic surgeon and an upper gastro intestinal surgeon.

"We successfully removed the entire tumour, implanted 12 screws, two rods and an expandable titanium cage to hold the spine together, and reconstructed the chest wall," adds Mr Dalzell.

"The patient responded very well to the treatment and was discharged from hospital after 14 days."

Primary spinal tumours are rare, adds Mr Dalzell. He treats an average of four to five cases of primary spinal tumours a year.