

A long road to recovery for Ian

Poisoned pastor 'stable'

Athos Sirianos

The Korumburra pastor who was poisoned and remained in a critical state in hospital could face a long road to recovery if he underwent a liver transplant.

Recovery from a "catastrophic sudden liver injury" could take months longer than routine chronic liver diseases, according to gastroenterologist and liver specialist Dr Nathan Connelly from Moon-ee Valley Specialist Care, who said the difference between the two were "chalk and cheese".

Ian Wilkinson, his wife Heather Wilkinson, her sister Gail Patterson and husband Don Patterson were poisoned at a lunch in Leongatha on July 29.

The lunch, believed to be a beef Wellington dish, was cooked by Mr and Mrs Patterson's former daughter-in-law Erin Patterson.

Don, Gail and Heather all died in hospital.

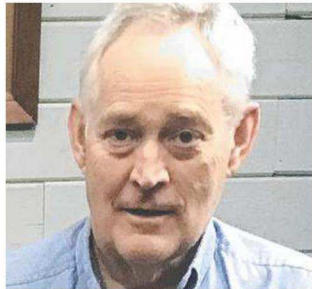
The Herald Sun is not suggesting that Ms Patterson intentionally poisoned her guests, only that police are investigating the matter.

Police revealed in the days after the poisoning that Mr Wilkinson was awaiting a liver transplant.

Death cap mushrooms contain several heat stable toxins – which means they cannot be destroyed by cooking – that are particularly toxic to the liver, kidney and gut.

Amatoxins are the main toxins that cause the death of liver cells, which can lead to "irreversible" liver failure where the only way a patient can survive is through a transplant.

Dr Connelly said people who



Ian Wilkinson

ate death cap mushrooms became "very sick, very quickly".

"It doesn't take a lot of eating [death cap mushrooms] to make you very sick," he said.

"Initially you might have patients with amatoxin poisoning get this acute gastro-like illness which they might confuse with routine food poisoning, so things like vomiting and diarrhoea would be the symptoms," he said. "A couple of days later they become jaundice.

"The liver tests then become very abnormal and then the liver can't detoxify the blood properly and they often go into a coma".

Moreover, Dr Connelly said severe poisoning can also bring about further complications along the way.

"It's a lot to do with how bad the liver is and whether there are any complications. It also depends if kidneys have failed and whether they get secondary infections or other side effects, how much brain swelling they get, all these factors determine whether they can hang on long enough to arrange a liver transplant," Dr Connelly said.

This week Mr Wilkinson's family said he was in a "critical but stable condition" and were "deeply moved" by the community's support.



Jessica Mauboy and Rachel Griffiths open the new Geelong Arts Centre. Picture: Mark Wilson

Star Griffiths art and soul

Nui Te Koha

Actor Rachel Griffiths has returned to the hub that sparked the creative instincts and truths that took her all the way to Hollywood.

Griffiths' breakthrough came from two years working as a full-time actor with the Geelong-based community theatre group, Woolly Jumpers. From there, she went on to star in the hit movie Muriel's Wedding, for which she won an AACTA Award.

"Woolly Jumpers is where I learned to be strong and brave and really take

command of a stage," Griffiths said at the opening of the Geelong Arts Centre redevelopment on Friday.

The Arts Centre has undergone a \$140m refurbishment, including interior designs and concepts by First Nations artists.

Griffiths added: "I came out of Geelong as a stronger performer. You can't fake it here. You really have to show up. The bullshit meter is really high in regional towns, so it has to be gutsy and true. Country audiences won't sit there politely if something is dreadful."

Griffiths' credits include My Best Friend's Wedding, opposite Julia Roberts, and critically-acclaimed US drama Six Feet Under.

She attended the centre's gala opening with award-winning singer Jessica Mauboy. Mauboy said the Indigenous designs and concepts woven into the building made her proud.

"The fabrics of water, land, air, sky and environment in this creative space makes me feel like I'm home," she said. "I know mob from here have been dreaming of a space to tell stories, and now we have it."

Sarkozy's backing Putin war

PARIS: Ex-French president Nicolas Sarkozy has caused anger with a vigorous defence of Vladimir Putin and a call for Ukraine to accept the Russian occupation of Crimea and other conquered territories.

The 68-year-old conservative, still a powerful figure in France, blamed Western leaders for precipitating Russia's full-scale invasion last year.

In an interview to promote his latest volume of memoirs, Mr Sarkozy, who left office in 2012, said the West had failed

to understand Russia's historic fear of being surrounded by enemies and had goaded Mr Putin with its increasingly closer relations with Ukraine.

President Macron had been wrong to break off dialogue with Mr Putin last year "under pressure from the east European countries", he said.

"They say Putin is not the man I knew. I'm not convinced. I had dozens of conversations with him. He is not irrational."

Ukraine must concede territory for peace, Mr Sarkozy said.

"The Ukrainians will want to reconquer what has been unjustly taken from them. But if they can't ... the choice will be between a frozen conflict or taking the high road out with referendums overseen by the international community."

It was "an illusion" to imagine that Ukraine could recover Crimea, he added.

Heart in the mouth stuff

International researchers have found a link between white blood cells in the saliva of healthy young adults and the early risk of heart disease.

Knowing that periodontitis – a health problem involving infected gums – is linked to heart disease, the Canadian team recruited 28 non-smokers aged 18-30 and asked them to rinse their mouths with saline, which was collected for analysis, and then took blood pressure and other heart measurements.

They found higher levels of white blood cells in saliva were linked to less healthy arteries and a potentially higher risk of heart disease.

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