

# Better cancer hits for elderly

ADDING chemotherapy to radiation treatment can help elderly patients with the most aggressive type of brain tumour live longer, an Australian-led international trial has found.

The study provides the first evidence that combining the two treatments for glioblastoma, rather than just relying on radiation alone, can extend survival without significantly affecting quality of life.

## **BRIGID O'CONNELL**

The study was the first to compare the standard short-course radiation — which uses high energy X-rays to kill tumour cells — to radiation with monthly doses of the chemotherapy temozolomide added in 560 elderly patients, including almost 100 across Australia and New Zealand.

The findings, presented last night at the American Society

of Clinical Oncology's annual meeting in Chicago, show that one-year and two-year survival rates were 37.8 per cent and 10.4 per cent for the combination treatment, compared with 22.2 per cent and 2.8 per cent for radiation alone.

Trial co-chair and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre radiation oncologist, Dr Claire Phillips said there had previously been a tendency to be “gentle” treating the elderly.