



Heart checks a cruise

High-tech implant puts John on deck

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EVEN a dangerous heart condition has failed to end John Gleeson's world holiday dream – thanks to Australia-first medical technology.

The 64-year-old Gladstone man has become the first Australian to be implanted with wireless technology allowing doctors to monitor his

heart via the internet while he is travelling overseas.

Mr Gleeson feared his round-the-world trip would have to be cancelled when abnormal heart rhythms meant he needed to have an internal defibrillator fitted.

But he set sail last week on a five-month journey after receiving the monitor implant, which enables his doctor, Brisbane cardiologist John Hayes, to keep a close eye on him.

Mr Gleeson's defibrillator was fitted at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital and included Merlin.net, a remote monitoring system developed by St Jude Medical. The system has a transmitter with wireless capability linked to the 3G mobile network.

While Mr Gleeson and his wife Joy travel the world, Dr Hayes will be able to check his

heart rhythms and diagnostic data via the web.

No matter where he is, if there is network capability the transmitter automatically downloads Mr Gleeson's defibrillator data while he sleeps to a secure website that Dr Hayes can access.

The website is password-secured, and for patient safety the defibrillator cannot be remotely activated or deactivated from the website.

Dr Hayes said the data enabled him to adjust medication or prescribe additional therapy without seeing Mr Gleeson in person.

"It means I can closely monitor Mr Gleeson's cardiac arrhythmias and device function while he is travelling."

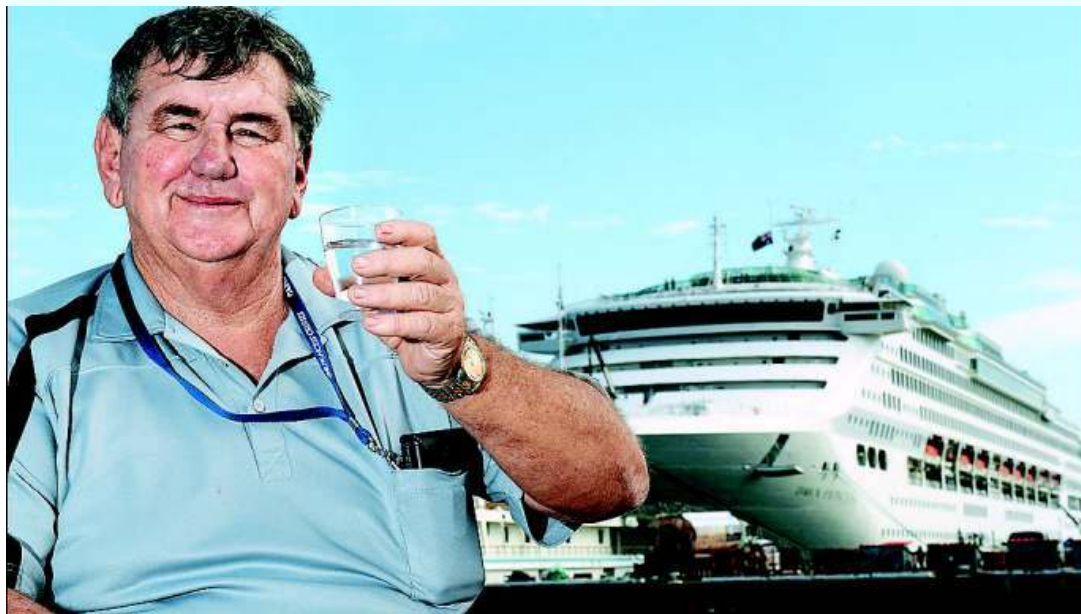
Remote monitoring of pacemakers and defibrillators has been available via landline

phones since 2003, but this latest wireless technology gives patients and doctors access to data anywhere in the world with 3G mobile networks.

"It's the ideal solution for patients like Mr Gleeson who want the freedom to travel without worrying about their cardiac health," Dr Hayes said.

With about 20,000 patients fitted with pacemakers and defibrillators every year across Australia and New Zealand, this new technology allows doctors to closely monitor a patient's progress without the patient having to physically visit their cardiologist as often.

It will also be ideal for patients in remote locations around Australia without landline access.



HERE'S CHEERS: John Gleeson has hit the high seas on the liner Dawn Princess with the aid of a heart wireless implant.

Picture: Justin Sanson