



Dr Martin Phillips and Professor Felix Herth examine an endobronchial valve. Photo: Paul McGovern

Tiny valve is a breath of fresh air

By **DAVID HUDLESTON**

Lung expert Felix Herth, from Germany, was at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital on Wednesday to discuss late-stage emphysema treatments with local expert Martin Phillips.

Late-stage emphysema is a type of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

More than half a million Australians have COPD, causing long-term shortness of breath.

It is the fourth most common cause of death in Australian men, and sixth in women.

While there is no cure,

treatments can help improve their quality of life.

Both doctors are pioneers in a particular form of treatment called bronchoscopic lung volume reduction.

One of the treatments involves inserting tiny one-way valves (endobronchial valves) to block airflow to the diseased parts of the lung, while improving the flow of air to healthy parts.

The valves are implanted through the mouth and throat, which means there are no large incisions or scars.

Following the procedure, the diseased part of the patient's

lung shrinks, while healthier parts may expand and function more effectively – resulting in improved breathing, ability to exercise and better quality of life.

A paper on Professor Herth's work with endobronchial valve therapy was recently published in the international medical journal, *Respiration*.

He is using his Australian visit to teach and learn from local doctors.

Professor Phillips' department at the hospital is regarded as one of Australia's leading research units.