

# bcrc-wa what's news

Issue 14  
Jun - Aug  
2017

NEWSLETTER OF  breast cancer  
research centre - WA



**Prof. Arlene Chan**  
Director – BCTU  
Vice-Chair – BCRC-WA

## Welcome to Issue 14!

USA health authorities approve new drug - BCRC-WA plays a pivotal role.

Issue 14 of 'What's News' marks the turn of a new season, the end of autumn and the first days of winter. It amazes me that I have so many positive stories to share with you since our last edition.

Amongst all the news on our ongoing clinical trials and research projects, this month we are delighted with the recent announcement that the Food and Drug Administration (the licencing body for new medications in the USA) has given approval for use of the drug neratinib. This is a drug used exclusively for patients with HER2-positive breast cancer. Neratinib, an oral drug, was evaluated in the ExteNET trial which commenced 8 years ago with the involvement of 497 cancer centres in 41 countries. We are proud to have been the world's leading recruiter, and successfully passed an FDA audit in the lead-up to the

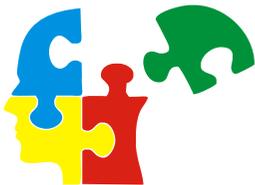
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drug's approval. As the study's lead author and Chair of the academic steering committee, I was especially pleased that the expertise and hard-work of my many wonderful staff in the Breast Clinic Trials Unit were able to be rewarded by the successful FDA approval. This drug now becomes another important weapon in our armamentarium to combat the aggressive

... continued Page 5

# Mind- Bender



Question: Johnny's mother had three children. The first child was named April. The second child was named May. What was the third child's name?

Answer: Johnny



## Did you know...

BCRC-WA is a  
**Not-for-Profit,  
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organisation?**  
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## Meet the BCRC staff



**Introducing:**  
Sophie Cornell

**Position:**  
Study Coordinator /  
Ethics & Research Officer

### What does your role involve?

I have been working at the Breast Clinical Trials Unit for a year now. I am employed full time, initially as a Study Coordinator, and now I do a mixed role of this and as Ethics and Research Officer. I enjoy very much the patient interaction I have with the Coordinator role. With the addition of the Ethics role, it is very interesting to get an insight into another department and have responsibility especially for the start-ups of new trials. The team I work with are very supportive, friendly and passionate about clinical trials and patient care.

### Tell us about yourself

I was born in Perth and have lived here most of my life. I studied Health Promotion (Bachelor of Science) at Curtin University several years ago. After graduating I lived and travelled overseas for 4 years in London, Europe, Canada and South America. I am a real foodie so one of my favourite things to do was checking out the local cuisine. I saw my first Canadian black bear out in the wild from only a few metres away! I also attempted snowboarding on some daring slopes.

I knew upon returning to Perth I wanted to work in the area of health. I didn't know at that point I would end up in this area but it has been an eye opening and rewarding experience so far! Since being back I have taken up Salsa dancing which has not only been a great form of exercise but a good way to challenge myself.

## CEO Corner

There is a lot of excitement as we continue to undertake planning for our world-class integrated breast cancer centre.

This centre is the result of harnessing world's best practice, 20+ years of clinician experience, and patient feedback around the breast cancer journey for them and their families. We continue to provide highest level treatment and research, and in the next few years we will add support services to achieve our aim of a one-stop shop.

It is most inspirational to be working with such a wonderful group of physicians and researchers. The motivation and passion will always be there at BCRC-WA as we see nearly 12 new breast cancer patients a week, and our focus will remain to achieve best outcomes for patients and patient families.

To all our supporters we thank you so much, as all the donations have been very much appreciated and will go directly to better patient treatment. We hope that you can help spread the message as we are not big on blowing our own trumpet, but some key differentiating factors at Breast Cancer Research – WA include:

- We are Australia's busiest breast cancer trials unit with 57% of our trials being metastatic trials
- We remain at the forefront of research and treatment, and allow our patients access to new and improved regimes. As our research is directly translatable there is the potential for quick and significant impact, and particularly so for metastatic or advanced breast cancer patients
- BCRC-WA runs with minimal bureaucracy and always will, to ensure all of the donation goes directly to better patient outcomes

- At BCRC-WA we have the highest levels of accountability and governance, and fare well against other charities, and therefore hope to be on the radar of anyone who wishes to donate to breast cancer

Over the next couple of years we will be refining our model to determine which support services will be included in the new integrated breast cancer centre, and although we have determined the types of key support services we will work through how best to collaborate with providers in order to ensure maximum benefit for our patients. This will be a flexible support model as we will incorporate new services as and when appropriate within the new centre.

We would love you to partner with us on this journey as this is a centre of significant, impactful and unique excellence. Our patients are our best ambassadors, and the constant wonderful feedback is appreciated, but we will not rest on our laurels and intend to constantly improve and benchmark what we do against the world's best. Come along for the journey!

To discuss this further, please feel free to contact me.



**Carmelo Arto BSc MBA**  
Chief Executive Officer



## Welcome to Issue 14!

... continued from cover

HER2-positive breast cancer and improve the long-term cure rates in the early breast cancer setting. Ongoing trials are assessing this drug in the metastatic and neoadjuvant (prior to breast surgery) setting.

We continue to work towards developing a world-class Comprehensive Breast Cancer Centre, available to treat and advise on the best treatment options to all West Australians affected by breast cancer. Our Centre will act as a 'one stop shop', providing one location which offers access to treatment, support services and personalised care; as well as serve as a tertiary referral centre to advise community and rural doctors caring for breast cancer patients.

In April, Narelle Helsemans and I discussed with Channel 9 the impact of a breast cancer diagnosis and the importance a 'one stop shop' to provide world-class, state-of-the-art and, importantly, personalised care for women and men affected by breast cancer. Our CEO, Carmelo Arto, discusses the Centre further in the CEO Corner on page 3.

This year, we have also been fortunate to receive ongoing generous support from local communities, workplaces and individuals through donations and fundraising efforts. We would like to express our immense gratitude to all those who continue to

support BCRC-WA – without your support the patient-focussed research and education that we strive to conduct would not be possible.

The last days of autumn also hosted International Clinical Trials Day on the 20th of May. This day highlights the importance of ongoing International Clinical Trials and Research across all fields of medicine. BCRC-WA joined other clinical trial units along with Hollywood Hospital to mark the day.

As we continue to work towards the best evidence-based treatment for breast cancer, I am reminded that whilst breast cancer is the commonest cancer affecting women in the world, information regarding treatment can often be misrepresented or confusing in the general media or 'Dr Google'.

In this edition I discuss Part two of "Treatment Myths". This article is a three part series which brings to light common "Beauty Myths" and I am hoping will help to dispel "fact versus fiction" statements regarding breast cancer and its treatment side effects.

I would like to finish off by welcoming Jessica Danti to our team as the new administration officer. Jess has picked up the reins from the strong foundations laid by Rochelle (who has moved into a position in the university with our well wishes) and done a marvellous job in her few short weeks with us. Lastly, I again wish to thank everybody involved, for your ongoing contribution and support for all that we are trying to achieve at BCRC-WA.

# Pynks

POSITIVE • YOUNG • NURTURING  
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*Do you have secondary cancer?*

*Like to talk to like-minded people,  
who really understand?*

Pynks is a support and information group for younger women and those who are young at heart. Pynks provides facts and topics relevant to advanced secondary breast cancer.

For more information telephone **6500 5501**  
or email [info@bcrc-wa.com.au](mailto:info@bcrc-wa.com.au)



## International Clinical Trials Day

BCRC-WA joining Affinity Clinical Research Services, Theranostics, The Australian Alzheimers Research Foundation and Hollywood Private Hospital Research Foundation and Clinical Trials Unit to celebrate International Clinical Trials Day on the 20th May 2017.



# Trek the Kokoda for Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA

In April 2018, from the 23rd April to 1st May (8 nights), I would like you to join me in my cause to raise funds for Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA by trekking the Kokoda Trail.

By raising money for their research and increasing awareness of Metastatic Breast Cancer, join me in the fight against breast cancer.

Here is my reason why:

In December 2013 life as we knew it was about to change forever. Not long after returning from a cruise to celebrate my wife's 40th birthday we got the shock of our lives when my wife was diagnosed with Stage IV Metastatic (also known as advanced or secondary) Breast Cancer. Scans revealed a tumour in her right breast, 8 tumours in her liver and 5 tumours in her bones, as well as others in her right lymph nodes. We were told the cancer was aggressive, and treatment started immediately.

We barely had time to absorb the abundance of information that came our way, let alone work out how we were supposed to explain to our three young daughters that Mum needed to have some "special medicine" and surgery - even though she didn't "LOOK" sick. My wife had no hesitation in deciding to have a double mastectomy, but first came 5 months of chemo, then surgery followed by 6 weeks of radiation.

At the time of diagnosis it was explained to us that Metastatic Breast Cancer is incurable, but thanks to advances in treatment is very treatable and would mean treatment for life. Our "hope" came in the form of my wife's amazing Oncologist, Professor Arlene Chan, whom we were lucky to be referred to by my wife's GP. My wife's cancer responded well to the treatment immediately (every 3 weeks to Perth from regional WA) and before long was in partial remission, and stable.

Things were running smoothly until in July 2016 my wife was experiencing headaches and vertigo symptoms and our worst fears became reality – scans revealed 2 large tumours in her brain which required immediate surgery to remove the tumours due to swelling on her brain. I remember my wife in tears, terrified of the situation she was now in. Lost for words and terrified myself, not even sure I believed what I was saying, I tried to console her: "it'll be ok, Prof Chan will know what to do." Within a few days my wife underwent the first of 2 brain surgeries. Walking out of the hospital after leaving her in theatre was the longest 6 hours of my life and when the surgeon came in to tell me "all went well" to say I was relieved would be an understatement. After 2 weeks of recovery and having to learn to walk again (due to the tumours being located in the part of the brain which controlled co-ordination - cerebellum) it was time for round 2. Thankfully surgery was again successful. After some more time to recover she underwent another 6 weeks of radiation on the brain (an insurance policy so to speak).

I recently heard one of Professor Chan's other patients say in a radio interview, "how do you say thank you to the woman who is helping keep you alive?" This is my way, on behalf of my wife, of saying "thank you" to Professor Arlene Chan and her colleagues who have become "our Hope", by helping them continue their amazing work at the Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA.

Please make all donations directly to the Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA by clicking on the link below. Please be sure to reference "Trek the Kokoda" in the box below the donation amount. Our Facebook page is Trek the Kokoda for Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA.

<http://bcrc-wa.com.au/make-a-donation/>

Thank you  
Karl



## Breast Cancer Myths Part 2

In our March Newsletter, the aptly titled Breast Cancer Myths by Prof Arlene Chan talked about "Treatment Myths" last quarter. This article continues the theme with "Beauty Myths" to help dispel the "fact versus fiction" statements regarding breast cancer and its treatment side effects.

### BEAUTY MYTHS

#### 1 - Chemotherapy always makes your hair fall out.

Chemotherapy is a broad term that covers a wide selection of drugs – frequently used in combination of 2 or 3 drugs, and occasionally as a single drug. Not all the drugs have the side effect of hair loss (alopecia) and some alopecia is so mild that the hair just becomes thinner. Other drugs will produce complete alopecia and some, but not all, of the drugs used for early breast cancer are in this category.

When hair loss occurs, there is progressive, rapid loss of hair in patches. Many women will choose to shave their head at this time, but that is a personal choice. It is common for women to retain some strands of hair in patches, so do not be surprised if you don't have a completely "shiny bald" scalp.

#### 2 - You shouldn't colour your hair after chemotherapy.

This is an unfounded myth and can be ignored. Chemotherapy often makes your hair regrow more grey temporarily, although for others it may become darker. Hair regrowth can be quite slow but you can have hair colour whenever you feel your hair is long enough. You may wish to seek out organic hair colours available on the market, and some hairdressers stock these.

#### 3 - Only the hair on your head falls out with chemotherapy.

Different drug combinations affect the hair follicles differently. Some result in very little hair loss, while others result in hair loss that successively includes small facial hairs, eyebrows, eyelashes and occasionally even some pubic hair.

#### 4 - Black nail polish will protect your nails from being damaged by chemotherapy.

This has not been proven in scientifically conducted research, it appears to be a fad that comes and goes. There is no harm in black nail polish, however, if you like it. Sometimes it is a good idea to remove any nail polish for your oncology appointments, as this allows your doctor to examine your nails for any changes or signs of infection.

#### 5 - You can't have massages because it spreads the cancer.

This was advice given to many physiotherapists during their training some years ago. It is incorrect. Massage is now used as a complementary treatment for many cancer patients, and is safe.

### Professor Arlene Chan

Medical Oncologist

School of Medicine, Curtin University

Director Breast Clinical Trials Unit, Hollywood Private Hospital,

Vice-Chair Breast Cancer Research Centre - WA



# Wnt signalling in TNBC

The Wnt (pronounced 'wint') signalling pathway is important for communication in the body.

Cancer is a complex disease which involves many cell pathways (i.e communication from the surface of the cell to within the cell to the "heart" of the cell, the nucleus). Every cell has genes in the nucleus which essentially give directions to the cell on how it is to behave and function. Mutations (i.e. damage to a gene's function) to important genes can then effect cell signalling pathways which then causes tumour cells to grow and possibly spread to other parts of the body.

Signalling pathways are important to all cells because they allow cells to communicate to its own nucleus and also with other cells in the rest of the body. When signalling pathways aren't working properly, cells do not receive the correct messages and this can lead to diseases, including cancer.

Research has shown that a loss of control of the signalling pathways occurs in many cancers, including triple negative breast cancer (TNBC). TNBC is an aggressive breast cancer and its name comes from the fact that these breast cancer cells lacks estrogen receptors, progesterone receptors and HER-2 receptors. TNBC is associated with a worse prognosis than other types of breast cancer but remains treatable with chemotherapy, which remains the current gold standard for treatment.

The Wnt (pronounced 'wint') signalling pathway is important for communication in the body. Research has shown that loss of control over the Wnt signalling pathway occurs in TNBC cells and TNBC stem cells (the "parent" cell).

## What is a cancer stem cell?

A cancer stem cell (CSC) is similar to normal stem cells. Like normal stem cells CSCs are also:

- Self-renewable: have the ability to copy or replicate themselves many times
- Undifferentiated: are unspecialised and do not have a tissue specific function
- Able to differentiate: become specialised cell types

Cancer stem cells are similar to normal stem cells and are thought to be involved in tumour growth. If the Wnt signalling pathway isn't working properly, breast cells do not receive the correct messages, which can result in these cells growing out of control and spreading throughout the body.

Research has shown that regaining control of the Wnt Signalling pathway could be important in the treatment of cancer. Researchers are currently developing drugs that target the Wnt signalling pathway and these drugs could mean new treatment options for patients with TNBC. Experiments in animals and cells are currently being carried out by researchers all over the world. These studies are aiming to improve our understanding of how signalling pathways are involved in cancer. This research is important because it provides a platform for the discovery and development of new drugs to help in the fight against breast cancer.



**Naomi Brook**  
Senior Study Coordinator  
Breast Clinical Trials Unit,  
BCRC-WA

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# International Women's Day Celebrations Fundraiser in Merredin

The "International Wheat Belt Event Committee" this year decided to celebrate "International Women's Day" on March 10th, and identified three organisations for which they wanted to help raise funds, one of which is Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA.

Over 90 guests gathered at the Cummins Theatre to celebrate and recognise the important women we admire and respect in all our communities. The event was sponsored by Collgar Windfarm, Dave Keamy, Mick Carlson, Nukarnai Football Club and Westpac Banking Corporation, with Dimensions Café catering a delicious 3-course lunch.

Guest speakers included the Honourable Mia Davies, Aimee Jones (owner of Fred Snow Print Shop), Tanya Dupagne (Camp Kulin Manager and Keynote speaker), and Priya Cooper OAM (Australian World Champion Disabled Swimmer). Verity Hughes from the local radio station was the MC for the day.



Proceeds from the sale of Fine Art Prints donated by Aimee Jones and part proceeds from ticket sales will help Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA continue their important research for breast cancer – a cause which we proudly support.

Thank you to all who attended and supported the event.

**Kerry Kretschmer**  
Westpac Bank Manager – Merredin

# Horseland Raising Funds for Breast Cancer Research

A big thankyou to Horseland Midland, Kelmscott and Bunbury for their incredible fundraising efforts in May.

And a special mention to Bates Saddles, Weatherbeeta, Spooks and Project Neon who donated prizes to the Horseland fundraising campaign.

Cheryl Campbell from Horseland and Narelle Helsemans raised and donated nearly \$30,000 to go towards breast cancer research.

Thank you to the team at Horseland and Narelle for your continued generosity and support.



Arlene, Narelle and Horseland

# The Benefits of Floating

Have you ever wondered what a session at the Float Tanks in Fremantle would be like? This month, the generous team at Float Fremantle donated four free floatation sessions to our Pynks Group.

Float tanks are said to encourage relaxation and stress relief. We chatted to Karen, one of the recipients of the free float sessions, to find out about her experience at the Fremantle Float Tanks.

## Before attending the Float, had you heard of a floatation tank before? What were your thoughts if so?

I had seen advertisements in my local newspaper and was very curious about it. I love a bath and find it very relaxing! This seemed like the ultimate 'bath'!

## Why were you keen to give the Floats a go?

For relaxation, and to see if it did help with aches and pains.

## The idea behind the floatation tank is stress release and deep relaxation, did you find this to be your experience?

I did find it helped with both (stress release and deep relaxation)

## How did you find the floatation tank benefited you?

It was an enjoyable new experience. I found it very calming and peaceful.

## What was the most interesting/surprising thing about the float?

Well the actual pod is amazing to behold! But the most interesting thing was that because they have so much magnesium in the water, I actually 'skimmed/float' on top of the water more than I expected.....I felt totally weightless! The other thing was that you could really stretch out.....

## How did you feel when you got home?

I felt very relaxed and rejuvenated.

## Would you do Float again or would you recommend it?

I would definitely do the float again, and I highly recommend it for people who particularly like the water and a bath. If you suffer from claustrophobia you may find the experience challenging. Having said that, you do not have to close the lid on the pod.

Thank you Fremantle Float!

BCRC- WA would like to thank the Fremantle Float Tanks for their kind donation and generosity.

To find out more about the Fremantle Float Tanks, visit <http://floatfremantle.com.au/therapeutic-benefits/>



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the amazing work of BCRC-WA!

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## Footy Teams Play & Mum's Relay on Mother's Day Weekend

Tim Reynolds of Scotch College on uniting School Communities through Footy, Fundraising and Raising Awareness for Breast Cancer Research.

On Saturday 13th May our Scotch College football community dedicated their home game vs Aquinas College to a cause close to our hearts, Breast Cancer Research.

The boys and parents of the 1st and 2nd XXVIII teams put on a pink-themed morning tea, wrapped the grandstand pink and collected donations from the crowd throughout the morning. The mother of one of the players also shared her own experience with Breast Cancer during the quarter time break, along with the importance of continued Breast Cancer Research.

'The players wore pink armbands to signify their support, and as the players ran onto the field at the beginning of the game their



mums lined the race holding pink balloons.'

Both Aquinas and Scotch College were generous in their support of this initiative and the boys loved the opportunity to support the player's family.

During the day we collected \$600.00 through donations and our BBQ sausage sizzle. I would like to thank the Breast Cancer Research Centre - WA for supporting our initiative and providing banners and other promotional material for the day.

**Tim Reynolds**  
Scotch College

## Thank you "Kalamunda Bushies"

A special mention to the "Kalamunda Bushies" who completed the Gipps River Challenge covering 660+km to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Research Centre -WA.

Thank you & Congratulations "Kalamunda Bushies"!



## Morning Tea Fundraiser

Please join us for an informative Morning Tea to hear Oncologist Professor Arlene Chan speak on Breast Cancer Research.

**Date:** Thursday 17 August 2017

**Location:** Mt Claremont Community Centre, Montgomery Avenue

**Time:** 9.30am for 10am

\$10 Entry (no maximum - tax deductible)

Contact John for more information  
0414 963 086

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Brought to you by Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA  
Held: Leslie Starcevich Day Suite in the Marjorie Brislee Wing  
When: On the last Thursday of each month 10am -12:30pm.  
RSVP IS ESSENTIAL via email  
To give you confidence to move forward with the start of your Chemotherapy treatment



# Did you know...



## Did you know... we are Australia's largest and busiest breast cancer research centre?

At least 10 of the research trials that we have been able to offer patients, have resulted in enhanced treatment for breast cancer internationally, as well as improved survival rates for patients



## Did you know... we generate all our own funding?

We receive no government funding.

BCRC-WA conducts and initiates our own research which are often performed to answer a clinical question or clinical needs which are important to patients.



## Did you know... you have the opportunity to contribute to a world-leading comprehensive breast cancer centre that we plan to move into 2019?

BCRC-WA's goal is to conduct research into the causes, prevention, and treatment of breast cancer, and enhance the multidisciplinary care to individuals with breast cancer and their carers.



## Did you know... you can walk in anytime and have a coffee with our CEO?

Sit down with the CEO of Breast Cancer Research Centre – WA, **Carmelo Arto** (pictured right) and he would be more than happy to discuss our wonderful journey towards this dedicated comprehensive breast cancer centre.