

# Jane's Story



I'm Jane . . . a wife, mother, sister, friend . . . a member of the cancer club, this is my story.

Cancer was not new to me, I lost both my parents at a young age to cancer and had a family history of the big 'C' that made any health professional I told look slightly horrified. As a result, I was scanned, poked and prodded on a regular basis from the age of 20 to check all was well. The one cancer they were not too concerned about was breast cancer. I had no family history and genetic testing showed I was not positive for the BRACA gene so all in all I was feeling pretty confident my boobies were going to be fine.

It was a normal day in October 2018 when I felt a small lump in my right breast and then another and then another. I very clearly remember the sinking feeling in my tummy - like I had swallowed a lead balloon. They were not "maybe that's a lump" they were "oh yes, that is definitely a lump," kind of lumps.

Off I went for an ultrasound and biopsy and even though the ultra-sonographer and Doctor didn't say anything one way or the other, I left the appointment pretty sure it wasn't going to be good news. My husband was on a work trip in China. I must have sounded worried on the phone as the minute he finished work he drove straight to the airport and jumped on the first flight home.

A few very long days later, at the age of 41 years, I was given the breast cancer diagnosis. There are a couple of key things I remember the most about this time. Firstly, was how quickly your world can change. One day everything was fine, actually, way better than fine, pretty damn great. I probably could not have been happier. I had a wonderful husband, three beautiful children, lots of amazing friends and a fabulous lifestyle. Then, literally overnight, everything was not fine, in fact it was really, really not fine. I went from feeling perfectly healthy one day to being told I was sick . . . really sick the next day. I found that part very tough to get my head around.



The other was fear - pure, intense, agonising fear that I was going to leave my young children without their mother and leave my wonderful husband the monumental job of raising them alone and a widower before the age of 40.

It took me a couple of days, but then I remembered my motto, “focus your energy on the things you can change and control”. I couldn’t change the breast cancer bit, but I could control how I dealt with it. I was smart enough to realise that I was no-where near an expert on cancer and neither was Dr google. My husband and I decided the best strategy was to search globally (if needed), for the best experts to help us through this. The Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA with Dr Peter Willsher and Professor Arlene Chan was the unchallenged winner in being at the forefront of Breast Cancer Research and management and luckily for us, they were based in Perth.

It was then that my journey through the incredible maze of breast cancer really began- from the first appointment we felt like BCRC-WA were guiding us through with the ultimate care, empathy and expertise. The CEO, nurses, administration staff and research unit are always kind and supportive. Professor Chan and Dr Willsher are true nurturers of the soul and never left us with any doubt that we were in the best possible hands.

My treatment consisted of a mastectomy, six months of chemotherapy followed by another mastectomy, subsequent reconstruction and followed with the removal of my ovaries. Not a walk in the park but by no means horrific.

I made the decision to “keep moving, keep fighting and keep a smile on my face”. I had three young children (3, 6 and 8 years old) to think about. I figured if I wasn’t frightened, if I kept up as much of my normal routines as possible and I continued to be the happy mummy they were used to, things would be ok. I am proud to say it worked.

I knew this most when my close friend was recently too diagnosed. I overheard my boy telling her son and his best mate, “don’t worry, your mum will be ok, she will have to have the yukky medicine but it’s actually fine and no big deal”.

I said at the start of this story that before the moment I found my lumps I couldn’t have been happier . . . Well, I’m pleased to say I am just as happy today. Perhaps a little more appreciative of the wonderful family and friends I have, perhaps a little less tolerant of the stuff that just doesn’t matter in life and definitely a whole lot more grateful for people like Professor Chan, Dr Willsher and the wonderful team around them.

Please support breast cancer research at BCRC-WA, your gift will help save more lives.”

Jane Gasteviski, patient