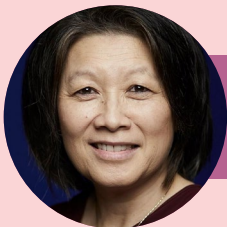


What's News



breast cancer
research centre-wa
Incorporating Perth Breast Cancer Institute

WELCOME TO THE 2023 WINTER EDITION



Prof. Arlene Chan AM
Medical Oncologist MBBS, FRACP, MMed (Palliative Care)

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with mixed emotions that I announce my retirement in November 2023, after 23 years as a breast medical oncologist and Director of the Breast Cancer Trial Unit here at Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA. This decision has come after much time in considering how best to provide a smooth transition of care for my patients to colleagues and ensuring that the conduct of our national and international trials program remains impactful on the breast cancer patient community. Whilst I look forward to a new chapter in my life, I am certainly sad at the thought of not caring for the patients who I have been privileged to have known, some for over 15 to 20 years. It will also be sad to be leaving behind a team of people and a mission that has been such an important part of my life for so long.

As the founder of the Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA, our fundamental focus has been and is on, the conduct of clinical trials and patient-centred research, education and support, which impacts positively on breast cancer patients' lives. I have been fortunate to be involved in and witness the incredible progress made in the fight against breast cancer. I am grateful for the opportunity that I have had, to be part of a team who have been able to offer new drug trials to the women and men in Western Australia diagnosed with this illness. In many instances, new drugs have been made available to our trial participants, years before their general availability to the breast cancer community as standard-of-care treatments. For us to see the improvement in cure rates, longer survival and better quality of lives in so many breast cancer patients, is an enormous privilege.

As I reflect back, I am so very pleased with what we have created - a world-class centre of excellence offering the women and men of Perth, access to many aspects of breast cancer dedicated

multidisciplinary care, as well as providing the opportunity to be part of the research process which ultimately leads to improved breast cancer survival and outcomes throughout the world. I am proud of the thousands of lives we have touched and trust our impact on the breast cancer community has been well-received.

I have been supported in my succession planning over the past years by a group of immensely dedicated and gifted Board of Directors, ably supported by our current CEO and business manager. I know that Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA will continue to thrive under the leadership of the Board, with my oncological and surgical colleagues and dedicated BCRC-WA team carrying on the important work that we do here. I am confident that the generous support of our donors and supporters, who have enabled us to achieve all that we have in the past, will continue to allow us to continue our work into the future. In doing so, I am hopeful that our mission to provide better outcomes for breast cancer patients and their families will be shared by those who support us.

I am also overwhelmed by the expressions of love and congratulations that have been expressed to me, as I directly convey my retirement plans to my patients. Tears have been shed and no doubt there will be more in the coming months from both sides of my desk, but I am confident that my patients will continue to find the support and clinical care they need in the team we have here at BCRC-WA.

As for this winter 2023 edition of What's News, I am delighted to welcome Dr Claire Beecroft and Emma Celis to BCRC-WA. Dr Beecroft was my Oncology Fellow in 2021 and we are all so delighted to welcome her back to BCRC-WA as a Consultant and the BCRC-WA Education lead. Emma Celis is our new Genetic Counsellor who is available to see women



Emma's story - [page 6](#)

and men affected by breast cancer and their family members, if a risk of carrying a breast cancer susceptible gene is suspected. Emma comes with the highest recommendation from Bhavya Vora, our previous genetic counsellor and we are so pleased to have her join our team.

You can read more about Claire and Emma on [Page 2](#).

In May we celebrated International Nurses Day and National Volunteer Week ([page 4](#)). I am so appreciative of their role at BCRC-WA and am pleased that we a dedicated period of time to acknowledge their important contribution to our patient care and invaluable assistance they give to clinicians and staff here at BCRC-WA.

Our Story of Hope comes from Emma Blake who recently ran the HBF Run for a Reason with her colleagues at Hollywood Hospital's physiology department on behalf of BCRC-WA. Together they raised over \$12,000 which I am both grateful and inspired by. You can read Emma's story on [pages 6-7](#).

On [pages 8-9](#) is a research update on our Resilience in Adolescent and Young People Project (RAYS). Françoise Ballantyne, clinical psychologist and one of the study coordinators of RAYS, answers a few questions about the research and findings.

I again extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the fundraisers on [pages 10-11](#). Your dedication, passion, and tireless efforts have made a tremendous impact on countless lives in our community.

NEW GENETIC COUNSELLOR

Emma Celis

Associate Genetic Counsellor
BSc, IBCLC, M Gen Couns, MHGSA



As a genetic counsellor, I help people navigate their personal risk for inherited cancer conditions and make informed decisions. I strive to unravel the intricacies of genetics, breaking down complex language and concepts into understandable and relatable terms. With a passion for client-centred counselling and open communication, I create a warm and welcoming space for each person I meet.

I am committed to safe, professional practice through using evidence-based theories, practical experience, reflection and collaboration. I listen deeply to my clients and practice human caring through warmth, empathy and genuineness. I place my clients at the centre of all planning and decision-making and meet each person where they are at, valuing their unique needs, cultural and spiritual beliefs along with personal choices.

Before becoming a genetic counsellor, I gained diverse experience through roles in the pharmaceutical industry, biotechnology research and project management. Having trained as an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, I also have a special interest in helping families through the early stages of parenthood.

Beyond my professional pursuits, I find joy in board games that bring people together, carving out time for yoga, watching foreign films and eating food that either makes me reminisce about past travels or planning future adventures. I cherish precious moments with my family, including my two young sons, who constantly remind me of the importance of embracing life's simple pleasures and finding delight in the everyday moments.

I look forward to the opportunity to support you on your unique journey, providing you with compassionate guidance and empowering you to make informed decisions about your health and well-being.

NEW ONCOLOGIST

Dr Claire Beecroft

BCRC breast medical oncologist and Education Lead

I have recently joined the BCRC-WA team as a medical oncologist. Through the major public hospitals, I completed my medical and oncology training in Western Australia. I have been fortunate enough to complete a Fellowship at the Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA in 2021, supervised by Professor Arlene Chan. Through this, I gained experience in evidence-based breast cancer treatment and was involved, as a sub-investigator, in the local and international trials undertaken at BCRC-WA.

My other new role is as the Education Lead at BCRC-WA, responsible for teaching and educating staff, producing written breast cancer information for patients and families, and coordinating education sessions for GPs in the community. I look forward to continuing involvement in clinical breast cancer research and becoming one of the team at BCRC-WA.



Dr Claire Beecroft

SARAH'S

Note

As we near the end of the financial year I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you who has fundraised, donated money, time or goods to the Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA. Thanks to your support, we have been able to continue our vital work in providing world-class breast cancer care to the women of Western Australia who have been affected by breast cancer.

You may not be aware, but we are not government funded, we rely on the generous donations from individuals, their families and friends, to keep delivering on our mission. We are incredibly humbled by the amazing fundraising events our patients, their families, and friends hold.

This month, we received some particularly wonderful news. We were advised that BCRC-WA was the beneficiary of a bequest from a Western Australian lady who had passed away. This gift was left to us so that we could continue to provide the women of Western Australia with the same opportunity to receive world-class care and access to clinical trials that this patient had experienced. What an incredible gesture and what a difference this donation will make to the lives of so many patients.

Thanks to this bequest, we will be able to continue providing additional and free services such as our amazing breast care nurses, who provide specialised care and support to our patients during their breast cancer treatment. Our breast cancer care nurses are treasured and make such a difference to hundreds of women a year.

Once again, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of our donors, whether you have done a one-off fundraiser or been supporting us for many years. Your support is invaluable to us and we could not continue our work without you.

With deepest gratitude,
Sarah



INTERNATIONAL

Nurses Day

On May 12th we celebrated International Nurses Day. We invited Pam Minahan-Muir to write a few words about her experience with our breast care and clinical trial nurses. Here is what she had to say:

In January 2006 I commenced this Breast Cancer journey with a Mastectomy & Reconstruction. Whilst the hospital staff at the time were wonderful there was no dedicated Breast Nurse and I was never introduced to any.

Things have certainly changed, which I found out when diagnosed with Metastatic Cancer in November 2021.

How does one express the wonderful work these caring "angels" at BCRC-WA give us?

They always greet you with a warm smile, happy to answer any questions to put you

at ease and if they don't know the answer, they find out and let you know.

If one's BN is not available, any of the staff are happy to help.

I recently had a query that I could not get satisfaction from anywhere. I rang BCRC-WA, next thing I know I received a phone call and treatment, the same day, for the issue discussed.

My Nurse is sometimes so overwhelmed with paperwork, but always takes the time to discuss any issue I may have and sometimes a cuddle is nice and yes we have shared a tear as well.

These Nurses are greatly appreciated and needed by all of us on this journey.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU for the wonderful work you ALL do.

Sincere Regards,
Pam Minahan-Muir



Silvie Radmil (Nurse) Pam Minahan-Muir, Cath Griffiths (Nurse)

NATIONAL

Volunteer Week 2023

To our wonderful volunteers at the Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA, we couldn't let National Volunteer Week go by without expressing our deepest gratitude for everything you do. We are incredibly fortunate to have such an amazing group of women behind us. Thank you for sharing your time, energy, and talents with us - you make a world of difference.



"Volunteering gives me more than I give to BCRC-WA. I am blessed to greet so many beautiful people who continue to inspire me and remind me to appreciate every day.

I see the amazing work being done by the people who work at BCRC-WA, their dedication, compassion and commitment to finding a cure and caring for patients and their families. I have also learnt many new skills working in reception and carrying out tasks for the staff, gaining a new appreciation for all the work that goes on behind the scenes.

I look forward to my volunteer mornings as it allows me to give back to the team who looked after me and I see patients as they journey through their treatment. Some mornings the chatter and laughter in reception become a bit loud, but I take that as a positive."

- Rita



"After a long and successful career, in the Leadership and Management space, it is now time that I contribute to the workplace in a different way, into an industry that I'm passionate about.

Medicine has been of great interest to me for a long time. Now, that I have flexibility over my time, and when Dr Peter Willsher asked me if I had any interest in working as a volunteer at BCRC-WA, this opportunity was a perfect fit for me.

My role includes interacting with the brave patients under BCRC-WA's care and assisting them with their treatment. I find the work very rewarding and I enjoy every minute. I have so much admiration for our patients and I hope that my services bring some joy and assistance to their daily challenges.

I witness the hard work, dedication and kindness of the nurses and health staff and respect their tenacity. I observe a real sense of commitment from all the BCRC-WA staff in assisting in carrying out their research behind the scenes, trying to find a cure. For me, I look forward to my fortnightly commitment and hope that I bring some positivity to not only the wonderful staff but also the remarkable patients. After my shift, I go home with a sense of gratitude and satisfaction that I am fortunate to contribute to this important work."

- Nola

PYNKS

A group for women living with Metastatic Breast Cancer

PYNKS is a supportive social group for patients with metastatic or advanced breast cancer.



To join the PYNKS email jess.danti@bcrc-wa.com.au or speak with your Advanced Breast Care Nurse, Amanda Goddard.

GET SOCIAL

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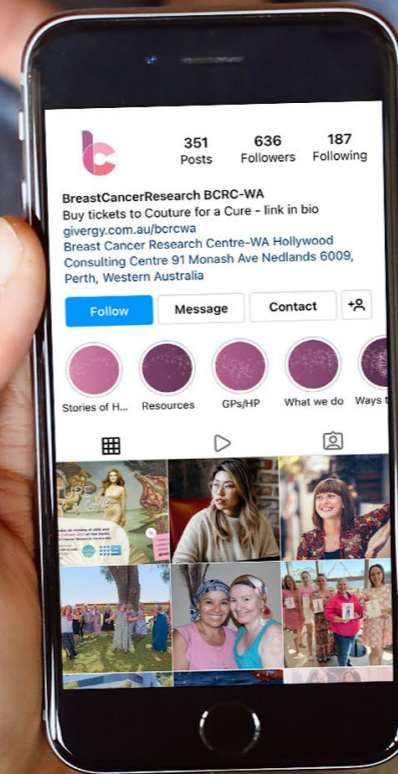
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Search for "BCRC-WA"



Story

My cancer journey began on a Friday in early January 2021, when I headed off to the Mount Hospital without a care in the world. I had an appointment for my first mammogram and ultrasound at age 41 because I thought that it was a good idea. My mum was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008, so starting routine breast cancer surveillance was always at the forefront of my mind. I was expecting to be told that the scans were clear and to return in a few years. Unfortunately, although the mammogram was normal, the ultrasound was not, and I had to undergo a biopsy. When the GP called me to deliver the news that the biopsy results were also abnormal, I was sent into a terrifying spin of panic and distress. I could not believe the words that I was hearing. The GP quickly referred me to Specialist Breast Surgeon, Dr Willsher, who had successfully treated my mum 13 years prior. Four days later, I was listening intently to him explain the details of my cancer and deliver the extensive treatment plan that would be required. This included surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, targeted therapy and endocrine therapy for a stage 1, grade 3, hormone receptor positive, HER2 positive, invasive ductal carcinoma. When chemotherapy was mentioned, I immediately burst into tears. It was very surreal, and I was in a complete state of shock.

Following the appointment, I was referred to Dawn, a Specialist Breast Care Nurse who gave me more details about what would happen next. She told me that I had to first focus on the surgery. My mind was racing all over the place and all I could think of was that I would lose all my hair and not be able to continue to work. I had been working long hours as a Physiotherapist at Hollywood Hospital and it felt very strange to suddenly go from treating patients in the hospital to becoming a patient myself. The situation felt very grim, and I could not see any way forward. Dawn then mentioned that there was a way to retain my hair with the use of the cold cap system. This immediately gave me a glimmer of hope that I held onto tightly. Dawn remained by my side throughout the entire journey from that day onwards, through the 12 months of intensive treatment and beyond. She was always there to listen and give me invaluable advice as well as calmly guide me through many stressful situations. Dawn was absolutely amazing, and I am forever grateful for everything she has done for me over the past two and a half years since my diagnosis.

"I have also met some incredibly special people along the way, who I now consider to be lifelong friends."



Dawn quickly referred me to the psychology service available for all patients under the care of the Perth Breast Cancer Institute where I met Francoise, a Clinical Psychologist. Francoise has taken me through my entire cancer journey from the initial diagnosis, through treatment and into survivorship. She has listened to me talk for many hours about my fears and anxieties but also celebrate my successes and achievements, always with so much compassion and understanding. Francoise provided me with strategies to overcome the many challenges I faced as a young woman with a cancer diagnosis and has helped transform me into the strong and resilient person I am now. I feel very blessed to have had the incredible support from both Dawn and Francoise, providing me with their reassurance and guidance during one of the most difficult and challenging times of my life.

After experiencing another minor hurdle where I was required to return to theatre for a second surgery, I was referred to Medical Oncologist, Professor Chan, for the next step in the treatment plan. After explaining the chemotherapy regime, she straight away suggested that I use the cold cap. This again gave me hope and it turned out to be a great success as I was able to retain all my hair. The cold cap was an absolute deal-breaker in this journey. I was prepared to endure whatever side effects I might have from the treatment, however losing my hair was one of my biggest fears. I am forever grateful that I was given access to this amazing technology which gave me so much confidence and had an enormous impact on my mental health. I returned to work in a part-time capacity at the start of the chemotherapy and was able to continue playing netball.

A few months after I finished radiotherapy under the care of Radiation Oncologist, Dr Zissiadis, I entered the Triathlon Pink. I participated to support fundraising for a cause I was now invested in. What I did not expect, was how much I enjoyed the sense of achievement in pushing my body, proving I had control and knowing that the cancer had not compromised it. I joined



a local running club and started entering long-distance running and triathlon events. I had a goal in mind to complete the half marathon distance of 21.1km. When the HBF Run for a Reason came up on my calendar, I found the challenge I was aiming for, a half marathon which I set up as a fundraiser for the Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA. I created team 'Hollywood Physio', a group of physiotherapy colleagues who were keen to support me and the fundraiser and run alongside me on the day. It was so important to me to raise as much money as possible as a way of personally thanking the outstanding organisation and staff that have provided me with so much care and support. The fundraiser was a great success and a total of \$12,643 was raised. I had donations and personalised messages of support and encouragement from so many people wanting to support breast cancer research. This run represented my breast cancer journey. It is tough, but you will eventually get through to the finish line with persistence and determination.

I would like to personally thank my amazing medical team of Dr Willsher, Professor Chan and Dr Zissiadis for all their expertise, reassurance and wonderful care during my treatment. I would also like to thank Dawn and Francoise for their support and guidance in helping me navigate my cancer journey. I would not be in the position I am today without this team of exceptional healthcare professionals. There is no doubt that a cancer diagnosis changes your life, however, it is possible that it can change for the better. I now see life with a completely different perspective, and it has led to many new opportunities and interests that I would never have thought were possible. I have also met some incredibly special people along the way, who I now consider to be lifelong friends. Life is full of challenges and adversity, but it gives us the courage and strength to face the future.

Emma Blake
Patient

Update

Resilience in Adolescent and Young People Project

A Q&A with one of the study investigators and Clinical Psychologist, Françoise Ballantyne



What is the basis of this research?

Understanding and supporting the emotional impact on young people when a parent has been diagnosed with breast cancer has been an important value and organisational objective of BCRC-WA. In 2019 Professor Chan and the team were the first in Australia to investigate the psychosocial impact and needs of children of mothers with early and metastatic breast cancer. We found that the young people aged 14-24 years surveyed wanted more clear information about their parent's breast cancer and how their family would cope with the changes the diagnosis might bring. Furthermore, approximately a third of these young people experienced some degree of distress related to their parent's diagnosis and this represented an area for potential intervention.

What is the RAYS project?

In response to this need, we launched the Resilience in Adolescent and Young People (RAYS) project last year. The RAYS project was designed to provide families with the opportunity to discuss and assess the psychosocial needs of their children (aged 14-24 years) with one of our BCRC-WA Clinical Psychologists. This is in the form of a consultation session either with or without parents present, depending on the child's age. This would then form the basis for a recommended intervention, to address any needs identified.

What are the possible interventions to meet psychosocial needs?

The recommendations from that assessment included one of the four options*:

1. Assessment only with no further need for psychology support required. Information will be provided on how to access services in the future if needed. This is suitable for children who have all their psychosocial needs met.
2. If during the consultation with the BCRC-WA Clinical Psychologist the primary need identified is access to further information, this would lead to the intervention of providing guidance as to how children can access age-appropriate information about their parent's breast cancer. This includes written handouts and verbal education.
3. It may be identified that the child would benefit from further support through other agencies (such as Canteen) better suited to the young person's needs. A referral can then take place as needed.
4. Additional time-limited sessions with a BCRC-WA Clinical Psychologist to address strategies specific to coping with their parent's breast cancer if it is identified that the young person would benefit from further psychological support.

(*The first 3 options involve a single-session consultation in most instances.)

Is the RAYS trial still available/open?

While the RAYS study has now closed, it has opened a new pathway for supporting families of women with breast cancer as standard of care. BCRC-WA will continue its commitment to supporting the needs of these families. The BCRC-WA Clinical Psychology Service will provide family-based assessments as outlined above, as standard delivery of care and be available to support the social-emotional needs of children up to 24 years of age.

What is your experience with working with children/adolescents?

One of the reassuring outcomes of working with children and adolescents who are impacted by a breast cancer diagnosis in the family, is that they are incredibly resilient. This is particularly evident, where parents have been tuned into their child's emotional experience and have been open and honest in their communication about what is happening. We know that while it can be an incredibly challenging time, acknowledging and normalising the strong emotions of sadness, fear, anger, frustration and guilt will not harm them emotionally, in fact, it will build their resilience to cope with difficult situations. This type of approach and building up support from family and friendship may be all that is needed. But of course for a small group of young people, additional professional support and guidance may be of help.

How can I get further information?

Please note appointments will be subject to availability and waiting periods may apply. If you have any questions or queries, please contact **Françoise Ballantyne – Clinical Psychologist** via 6500 5576 or psychology@bcrc-wa.com.au



PERTH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY HIGH TEA

Raised \$2,625

The Association of Financial Advisers (AFA) and FPA Women in Financial Planning WA teamed up to create a very special High Tea event in celebration of International Women's Day 2023.

The afternoon included High Tea, raffles, auctions, market stalls and a presentation from 40 under 40 2022 winner, Kasey Venter. Proceeds from this event went to 2 WA Charities including Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA and Goldfields Women's Refuge 'Hope Project'.

Our CEO, Sarah Fordham, attended the event with Caroline Hillcoat's and Tracy Robinson's art in tow.

Thank you to everyone who was part of the organizing process and to all the attendees for their generosity and kindness.



Left to Right: Kelly King, WA Chair of AFA Inspire, Joanne Ayrey of Insignia Financial and Sarah Fordham, BCRC-WA.

MOUNT LAWLEY FOOTBALL CLUB LADIES DAY

Raised \$1,000

On May 13th the Mount Lawley Football Club held their annual Ladies Day event in honour of their friends, girlfriends, wives, sisters, mothers, grandmothers and players.

The day's festivities included a footy game, a ladies' luncheon, grazing platters, complimentary bubbles and wine, a Mother's Day raffle and entertainment until late. Proceeds from the event were donated to Breast Cancer Research Centre-WA.

A big thank you to the club for their continued support.



IN MEMORY OF HELEN WRANKMORE

Raised \$1,500

On 22 April 2023, Klaydn and Vicki shaved and dyed their hair to raise funds for BCRC-WA in memory of their mother and grandmother, Helen Wrankmore.

"Mum was a very caring and loving mother, grandmother (Mimi) and foster carer. She accepted each child no matter their make and always made room for more. She was the family rock, peacekeeper, secret holder and therapist. She would always try to help others no matter what," said Vicki.

"The fundraiser was a way to honour her memory by helping others. She had such a positive attitude toward treatments and tried to encourage others. The fundraiser has been a very interesting adventure with good times and laughs. Ultimately, we ended up with very funky hair-dos that people love to ask about and continue to raise awareness.

I want to thank our most wonderful friend Chloe for donating and doing our hair, the local Donnybrook businesses that donated, and all the caring people who contributed to the cause."

We are truly honoured to have been the recipients of Vicki and Klaydn's fundraiser. Their \$1,500 will help us continue our research, support and care.

"For my Mimi, I miss you. I did this for others going through or who have gone through the same thing." - Klaydn



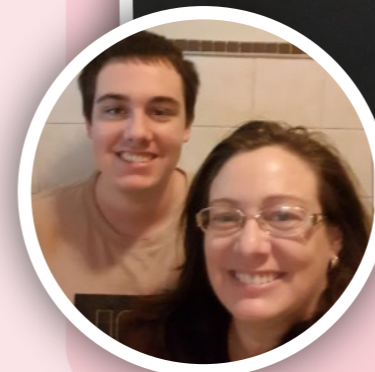
Helen Wrankmore



Klaydn



Vicki



DONATE

Today

There are many ways you can donate to BCRC-WA



Online at bcrc-wa.com.au



By direct deposit (NAB BSB: 086-006 Acct No: 73798 6097)



Phone us on (08) 6500 5501



In person at BCRC-WA, Suite 407, Hollywood Consulting Centre
91 Monash Avenue, Nedlands WA

Gifts of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

BCRC-WA is self-funded and does not receive any government funding.

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