

What's News



breast cancer
research centre-wa
Incorporating Perth Breast Cancer Institute

WELCOME TO THE 2024 WINTER EDITION

As the winter season embraces us with its crisp, cool air, we are excited to bring you the latest edition of **What's News**. This edition is packed with inspiring stories, important updates, and valuable insights that we hope will keep you informed and uplifted during these colder months.

On **page 2**, we are thrilled to introduce Dr. Azim Khan, a highly esteemed oncologist who has recently joined our team. Dr. Khan brings a wealth of knowledge and we are happy to have him on board.

On May 12th, we celebrated International Nurses Day, honouring the incredible dedication and hard work of our nursing staff. Their commitment to patient care is truly inspiring, and we took the opportunity to recognize and thank them for their invaluable contributions. See what our community had to say on **page 2**.

On **page 3**, our CEO, Sarah, shares her reflections and observations post-EOFY. Her insights offer a glimpse into the heart of our mission and the passion driving our efforts.

Page 3 also highlights our celebrations during Volunteer Week. We are immensely grateful for the time, energy, and enthusiasm our volunteers bring to our organisation.

In a heartwarming and inspiring feature on **pages 4-5**, Shaya shares her personal journey through breast cancer. Her story is one of resilience, motherhood and hope. Shaya's narrative is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the importance of never giving up. We hope her experience provides comfort and inspiration to others facing similar challenges.

We are proud to announce that BCRC-WA is the first breast cancer centre in Western Australia to utilise the SCOUT® Radar Localization System. This groundbreaking technology represents a significant advancement in breast cancer treatment. Mr. Jose Cid Fernandez answers some key questions about this innovative system and its benefits for our patients on **pages 6-7**.

Page 8 brings you an update on our latest research efforts, specifically focusing on the new trial, OPERA-01. Also on **page 8**, Clinical Psychologist Mary Scott offers practical wellbeing tips for managing hot flushes and other menopausal changes.

Finally, on **pages 9-11**, we express our deepest gratitude for the overwhelming fundraising support from the local Perth community. The generosity and solidarity shown by individuals, groups, and businesses have been truly remarkable. We extend our utmost admiration and thanks to every single person involved.

As you dive into this edition of **What's News**, we hope you find the stories and information both enlightening and inspiring. Thank you for being a part of our community and for your continued support.



Shaya's Story - **page 4**

Welcome

DR AZIM KHAN

Help us give a warm welcome to Dr. Azim Khan, the newest Medical Oncologist to join the BCRC-WA family. We are excited to have his expertise and dedication enhancing our team.

Azim completed his specialist training at Sir Charles Gairdner and Fiona Stanley Hospitals in Perth. He has further expertise in breast cancer through a Clinical Research Fellowship awarded by WA Palliative Care Network - WA Health. He also completed fellowships in Medical Oncology and Geriatric Medicine at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, enhancing his ability to tailor treatments for elderly cancer patients.

Engaged in clinical and translational research, Dr. Khan has authored publications in respected journals and presented at major conferences. His research interests include breast cancer and outcomes in the Indigenous population. Currently, he is investigating sarcopenia as a radiological biomarker in cancer patients, supported by a research grant from the Cancer Trials Unit.

Dr. Khan serves as a sub-investigator in cancer trials at Hollywood Private Hospital, contributing to advancements in cancer care. He is committed to developing geriatric oncology as a sub-specialty to improve outcomes for older adults with cancer.



SARAH'S

Note



As we wrap up the financial year, I want to thank all our donors, supporters, and the community for their incredible support. Your generosity is crucial to the Breast Cancer Research Centre - WA (BCRC-WA), allowing us to provide additional support such as breast care nurses and psychologists.

Our organisation relies on people. Without the talented and dedicated individuals who form the backbone of BCRC-WA, our mission would be impossible. Recently, we celebrated International Nurses Day and Volunteer Week, highlighting the vital contributions of our nurses and volunteers. Their compassion and commitment ensure our centre remains a place of hope and healing.

Our patients are at the core of everything we do. They show immense bravery and trust in us, inspiring us every day and reminding us why our work is so important. Over the last 2.5 years we have seen 6,000 new patients.

We are also deeply grateful to our donors and fundraisers. Your belief in our mission and generous contributions help

BCRC-WA thrive as a leading centre for breast cancer care in Western Australia. Your support is often a way to support a loved one having treatment, or to advance awareness in the community of breast cancer and sometimes in memorium for a loved one, every single act of fundraising no matter how big or small makes you part of our community forever.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Together, we are making a difference in many lives, and with your continued support and the advances in medicine, we can achieve even greater milestones.

**Warmest regards,
Sarah**

INTERNATIONAL

Nurses Day

On May 12th, we celebrated International Nurses Day, honouring our incredible nursing staff.

These amazing women come from all walks of life, and their diversity enriches our lives in our rooms and the lives of the patients who come through our doors each day.

Nurses play a crucial role at BCRC-WA, offering essential care and support with compassion and dedication. From administering medications to providing a comforting presence during challenging times, nurses are there every step of the way.

Thank you for all that you do!



Photo from left to right: Sarah, Amanda, Cath, Silvana and Jeannette
Not Pictured: Charlene and Sally



NATIONAL

Volunteer Week

From May 20-26, 2024, we celebrated National Volunteer Week, a time to extend our deepest gratitude to the incredible volunteers who make our mission possible. Your dedication, kindness, and hard work bring immense joy and support to our community. We are endlessly thankful for each and every one of our BCRC-WA volunteers.

A special shoutout to our waiting room favourite, Barney and his handler Steve. Together they bring smiles and comfort to our patients and staff every Thursday. This year, Barney's birthday fell on National Volunteer Week and we were so happy to be able to celebrate his 7th birthday!

Thank you, volunteers, for everything you do!



Life has a way of throwing curveballs when we least expect them. For me, that curveball came at the age of 28 when I saw a noticeable lump in my right breast.

After putting it off for a week, I went to see my GP who sent me for an ultrasound that afternoon. She tried to reassure me with the words "You're young so it's probably nothing" but I now know breast cancer, and cancer in general, does not discriminate, there are many of us who are diagnosed young.

Living in Kalgoorlie at the time and having a family, my husband and our beautiful two-year-old son, it was either fight or flight, and I chose to fight. Within days we were travelling 600kms away from home to our nearest city, Perth, where my life was overtaken by medical tests, waiting rooms and discussions with my medical team. This marked the beginning of my journey at BCRC-WA.

At my first consultation, I had the privilege of meeting Dr Kallyani Ponniah. She was direct and realistic laying out the facts and treatment plans however also very reassuring. There most certainly must not be an easy way to let someone know they have cancer but I left that appointment with a newfound strength and courage looking forward. I was then referred to medical oncologist Dr Peter Lau who is undoubtedly an expert in what he does. He is caring, compassionate and has a profound wealth of knowledge - always being able to answer any concerns or questions I had. With Dr Ponniah and Dr Lau on my side, I had the confidence that I would get through treatment and that this would all eventually feel like a strange dream.

Cath, who many patients know and love, has played such an important role throughout my journey. She was there to guide me on my first day of chemo and regularly checked up on me to see how I was doing. Always one phone call or email away and came to see me right before I went in for surgery.

I was also fortunate enough to be able to receive genetic counselling with Bhavya Vora. Together we went through my family history of cancer, he helped me get a better understanding of how this could have happened, what it could mean to other family members and provided informed and appropriate treatment choices after we knew my results.

My treatment consisted of six months of chemotherapy and immunotherapy, a double mastectomy with targeted axillary dissection and I will soon be starting 5 weeks of radiation. I can see that the end is near and this would not have been possible without the amazing team at BCRC-WA.

Throughout my journey there are a few things I have learnt and would love to share:

1. It's ok to ask for help. Whether that be because you're having a hard time with the side effects of treatment or struggling emotionally. Let your oncologist know as they will be able to help and there are resources, such as seeing a Clinical Psychologist, available at BCRC-WA for both patients and their families.
2. Joy shouldn't go away and it's ok to continue to do things that make you happy.
3. Celebrate even the simplest and smallest of wins. You got out of bed and got dressed when you weren't feeling the best? Great! You were able to take a walk! So good! You ate something even though you were feeling nauseous? Well done! Be proud of yourself.
4. You are your biggest advocate. Don't be afraid to ask something because no question is ever a silly question. (Sorry Dr Lau for the many questions I had after spending hours on Dr Google haha!)
5. And last but not least **BREAST CANCER DOES NOT DEFINE YOU.**

As I sat waiting to go into my very first appointment at BCRC I came across Cara's story of hope which I resonated with as we were both similar in age when diagnosed. I told myself that day I wanted to be able to share my story to hopefully give at least one other person hope that I received reading her story.

To anyone reading this, whether you are at the start of your journey, the middle or towards the end. Just know that this too shall pass, and you will one day look back on everything you've been through and realise just how capable you are. Breast cancer takes so much from you, but you learn things about yourself that you never would have without it.

So to the amazing team at BCRC-WA, thank you for creating a welcoming and safe environment and for the impact you all have on the lives of patients and their families. Thank you to my beautiful family I would not be in the position I am today without you all.

And last but not least to my Theo, mum did it - she won.



A Surgeon's Insight

ON THE SCOUT® RADAR LOCALIZATION SYSTEM

Q&A with Mr Jose Cid Fernandez

We are proud to announce that Breast Cancer Research Centre - WA is the first breast cancer centre in Western Australia to utilise the revolutionary SCOUT® Radar Localization System, made possible through the generous support of Hollywood Private Hospital. This cutting-edge technology marks a significant advancement in breast cancer surgery, enhancing the precision of tumour localization and improving patient comfort and outcomes. In this Q&A session, Mr Jose Cid Fernandez shares his expert insights into the SCOUT system, detailing its benefits and its impact on surgical practices and patient care.

Q: What is the SCOUT radar localization system?

A: The SCOUT localization system is a new technology designed to help us locate nonpalpable breast cancers. Around 30 to 40% of breast cancers are found through screening, making them very small and undetectable by touch.

During surgery, accurately locating these cancers is crucial. Traditionally, we used a wire localization method from the 1970s, involving a radiologist inserting a fine wire with a hook into the breast to mark the tumour. However, this wire sticks out of the skin, causing discomfort for the patient and adding complexity to scheduling since it must be inserted on the day of surgery.

The SCOUT system, on the other hand, uses a tiny radar-based reflector that is placed in the breast where the tumour is located. This can be done days or even months before surgery. During the operation, the reflector sends a signal to a console, guiding us to the tumour, making the process more comfortable for the patient and more efficient for the surgical team.

Q: What are the main benefits of using SCOUT for patients undergoing breast cancer surgery?

A: The SCOUT system offers significant benefits for patients, radiologists, and surgeons. For patients, it is much more comfortable, as the reflector is about the size of a grain of rice and is inserted with a device similar to an injection, which is far less painful than having a wire protruding from the skin for hours before surgery.

Radiologists prefer it, with reports of 85% of them finding that inserting the SCOUT reflector is easier than the traditional wire.

For surgeons, the SCOUT system offers greater precision, enabling us to locate the tumour within one millimetre. This accuracy facilitates the removal of cancerous tissue with a lower likelihood of requiring a second surgery. Plus, it allows for the conservation of more healthy tissue, contributing to improved cosmetic results. It also makes our surgical planning smoother since we don't have to place the wire on the day of surgery, which lowers patient stress and streamlines operating room schedules.



Q: How does the placement of the SCOUT reflector at the time of biopsy benefit patients, particularly those with highly suspicious lesions?

A: If a lesion detected during screening is highly suspicious, we can place the SCOUT reflector during the biopsy, eliminating the need for a second procedure to mark the tumour later. This is particularly beneficial for highly suspicious cases, although it is not used for all lesions due to the cost of the SCOUT reflector.

Q: How does SCOUT contribute to better cosmetic outcomes after surgery?

A: The SCOUT system allows for more precise incisions, improving cosmetic results. With wire localization, the wire's entry point is often far from the tumour, limiting where we can make incisions. The SCOUT reflector does not protrude through the skin, allowing us to place incisions strategically for better cosmetic outcomes.

Q: For patients receiving neoadjuvant therapy to shrink the tumour before surgery, how does SCOUT help in accurately locating the tumour or lymph nodes after the therapy?

A: For patients undergoing neoadjuvant chemotherapy to shrink the tumour, the SCOUT reflector is placed before starting therapy. This ensures that even if the tumour shrinks significantly or becomes invisible, we can still accurately locate and remove the tumour bed. The SCOUT reflector remains unaffected by chemotherapy and stays in place for months if needed.



Q: How does the ability of the SCOUT reflector to remain undetected in imaging studies impact a patient's ongoing care and monitoring?

A: The SCOUT reflector does not significantly interfere with imaging studies like MRI. Unlike metal clips that cause large artifacts on MRIs, the SCOUT reflector creates minimal interference, allowing for accurate monitoring of the tumour's response to chemotherapy.

Q: What prompted you to introduce the SCOUT system to the hospital?

A: The main motivation was to improve patient outcomes and surgical efficiency. The traditional wire localization method has significant limitations, including patient discomfort and logistical challenges. The SCOUT system offers a more comfortable experience for patients, greater accuracy in locating tumours, and better utilisation of operating room time. Embracing this new technology was a straightforward decision to enhance patient care.

DISCLAIMER: The information provided is for educational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice. For specific medical guidance, please consult your healthcare provider.

If you would like more information on the SCOUT Localization System, please ask your surgeon or your treating team. They can provide detailed insights and answer any specific questions you may have about this innovative technology and how it may benefit your treatment plan. Your healthcare team is always the best resource for personalized and up-to-date information.

Wellbeing Tips



HOT FLUSHES AND OTHER MENOPAUSAL CHANGES

Recommended Reading: Managing Hot Flushes and Night Sweats: A Cognitive Behavioural Self-Help Guide to the Menopause. By Myra Hunter, Melanie Smith (2020)

There are many biopsychosocial changes that occur during and after breast cancer treatment. Estrogen-blocking treatments and chemotherapy may induce or worsen menopause symptoms. As well as medical and lifestyle options to manage menopause symptoms, there are also evidence-based psychological therapies to address hot flushes, mood and anxiety, stress, insomnia, pain and sexual difficulties.

A good starting point is an awareness of how your treatment has impacted you. Reflect on the many changes that you are trying to accommodate in your life. Consider the following questions:

- What were all the roles and responsibilities you had in your life before your diagnosis?
- How has treatment impacted you psychologically, socially and physically?
- What new issues/ symptoms/ roles are you trying to accommodate now? This might include menopause symptoms, new medical issues, increased medical checks, life stressors, anxiety, low mood, lymphoedema, weight management, fitness regimes and more.

Adjusting to these changes takes time, self-education, inspiration, prioritisation, good support, self-compassion and a process of trial and error. Alongside this, there can be a grief process, which may include a healthy amount of anger and protest, as well as sadness and seeking comfort.

For menopause symptoms, referrals to these services can be discussed with your specialist or GP:

- BCRC-WA Clinical Psychology Service (phone 6500 5576)
- Menopause After Breast Cancer Clinic KEMH
- Women's Health Physiotherapists who specialise in vaginal and pelvic floor issues

RESEARCH

Update

Introducing the OPERA-01 Clinical Trial

OPERA-01

Official Title:

A Phase 3 Randomized, Open-Label Study of OP-1250 Monotherapy vs Standard of Care for the Treatment of ER+, HER2- Advanced or Metastatic Breast Cancer Following Endocrine and CDK 4/6 Inhibitor Therapy (OPERA-01)

Brief Summary:

This phase 3 clinical trial compares the safety and efficacy of palazestrant (OP-1250) to the standard-of-care options of fulvestrant or an aromatase inhibitor in women and men with breast cancer whose disease has advanced on at least one endocrine therapy in combination with a CDK4/6 inhibitor.

Open Clinical Trials

You can find the full list of open clinical trials on our website at www.bcrc-wa.com.au/open-clinical-trials

Referrals

If you would like to be considered for a clinical trial you will require a referral from your current treating team. You can find the clinical trials referral form on our website.

For more information on clinical trials, get in contact with our Breast Clinical Trial Unit:

Breast Clinical Trials Unit (BCTU)

Business hours, Mon to Friday between 9am – 5pm

Email: BCTU@bcrc-wa.com.au

Phone: (08) 6500 5575

FUNDRAISING

News

MOTHER'S DAY FUNDRAISER RUN

Raised: \$483

We were touched by the amazing efforts of the Coastal Cadence running club, who hosted a fundraiser that raised over \$480 for BCRC-WA. From runners to walkers, and even some adorable pups, everyone came together on Mother's Day for a fun morning of fitness and ice baths!

A big Thank you to our resident running fundraiser, Emma Blake, who shared her inspiring breast cancer journey on the day.

We are deeply grateful for every runner, walker and furry friend who contributed.

To learn more about Coastal Cadence, follow them on social media: @coastal.cadence



PINK DIPS WITH THE SEA GALS

Raised: \$1,380

The Sea Gals celebrated Mother's Day with a heartwarming PINK Dips Fundraiser on May 11 at Mullaloo Beach.

This special event encouraged women to bring their moms and join in sunrise ocean dips, fostering body acceptance, mental health, and a sense of belonging. The community's enthusiasm and generosity helped raise \$1,380 for BCRC-WA.

A big thank you to the Sea Gals for organising such an amazing event! We look forward to future collaborations and continuing our missions to support and uplift women.

If you would like to learn more about Sea Gals, visit www.seagalsaustralia.com.



Photo credit: @wonderthroughgold

HBF RUN FOR A REASON

Raised: \$22,071

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible 101 fundraisers and 9 dedicated teams who ran on behalf of BCRC-WA at this year's HBF Run for a Reason. Thanks to your extraordinary efforts and the generosity of 343 donations, we raised an impressive \$22,071!

Your support is invaluable and makes a significant impact on our cause. Thank you for making us your reason to run.



HIGH SCHOOL HEAD SHAVE

Raised: \$6,820

Two inspiring students from Karratha Senior High School, Cerys and Sid English, initiated a heartfelt fundraiser to support the Breast Cancer Research Centre - WA. Motivated by their beloved aunty who is currently receiving treatment at the centre, the siblings pledged to shorten their locks to raise funds for breast cancer research.

Their initiative garnered overwhelming support from the community, culminating in a remarkable \$6,820 in donations. The school community's enthusiasm was evident as Sid's classmates eagerly assisted in shedding his curls, while Cerys took an extra step by donating her hair to be used in making wigs.

A big thank you to Cerys, Sid, and everyone who supported their amazing effort!



LOOSE THREADS SEWING GROUP

Raised: \$2,025

The Loose Threads Sewing Group recently hosted a morning tea event to support breast cancer research.

Their efforts paid off tremendously, as they raised an impressive \$2,025 for Breast Cancer Research Centre - WA. The event showcased the group's commitment to making a positive impact in their community through both their passion for sewing and their generosity.



MARLOES MARS PADEL TOURNAMENT AND FUNDRAISER

Raised: \$702

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who made Padel Perth's Third Annual Marloes Mars Padel Tournament and Fundraiser a success! The event raised over \$700 for BCRC-WA!

Thank you to everyone's dedication and effort in organizing the tournament. The Marloes Mars memorial bench is such a beautiful tribute and an amazing testament to how much Marloes meant to so many.



ROCKY CITY HASH HOUSE HARRIERS

Raised: \$2,160

Amazing news from the Rocky City Hash House Harriers! This incredible group has done it again, raising a fantastic \$2,160 for BCRC-WA! Over the past decade, they've contributed more than \$33,000 to support our cause. We're beyond grateful for their continuous support and enthusiasm.



THINK PINK MOTHER'S DAY WALK

Raised: \$320

A warm thank you to the West Coast Walking Club for organising the incredible Think Pink Mother's Day Walk on Saturday, May 11th! Your support means the world to us at BCRC-WA.

Thank you to everyone who came out and brought their Mums along to make the day extra special! Your participation and generosity have made a significant impact.

Special thanks to the amazing organisers, Ru and Bell, for their dedication and hard work in making this event a success.

Follow West Coast Walking Club on social media: @westcoastwalking.club



LOVELY SMOCKING LADIES

Raised: \$670

The Lovely Smocking Ladies, a dedicated group of talented individuals, raised \$670 for BCRC-WA by crafting and selling beautiful smocked children's clothing.

This remarkable group consists of Kerry Harrison, Di MacPherson, Lydia Agnello, and Silvana Washbourne, all of whom were patients of Professor Arlene Chan and are active members of the PYNKS group. Their work carries on the legacy of Pam Seligmann, creator of the Lovely Smocking Ladies group, whose memory lives on in every piece they create.

Thank you ladies. We cannot express how touched we are by your donations.



NORMA MACDONALD'S BIRTHDAY FUNDRAISER

Raised: \$650

In celebration of her birthday, Norma MacDonald made a heartfelt request: instead of gifts, she asked for donations to be made to the Breast Cancer Research Centre - WA. Her generous spirit and dedication to this cause resulted in \$650 raised to support those affected by breast cancer.

A big warm thank you, Norma.



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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