



Breast Cancer Support Inc.

Newsletter

March 2010

Report from the Chair, Marie Goudge



Featuring now, on the BCS website are pages devoted to each of our Breast Friends groups. There are photos and reports of activities past, and information about plans for future meetings. Women are seen supporting each other and enjoying each other's company. In some cases the smiling faces are hiding real fear for the future, but in this company they know they are understood, that the "stiff upper lip" is allowed to quiver and that others can identify with their feelings. Unashamedly I am going to quote from one of the group's pages (you will have to go onto the website: www.breastcancersupport.co.nz to find out which group!). It is headed: **What do the women say about their Breast Friend's Group?** This is what the women have written:

- We support each other, we socialize and we discuss topics that are important to us.
- We attend to get companionship, understanding and fellowship.
- We come to share and help others on a similar journey to our own.
- We get information and learn, especially from the speakers, of other sources of support.
- We form friendships that continue outside the group.
- We meet lots of people of all ages who have experienced breast cancer and a common feeling links us.
- We meet women who have lived healthy lives for ten or twenty years after their diagnosis. Even those who have experienced a recurrence demonstrate hope that quality of life is possible.
- We honour and recognize the positive contribution of those who have passed on.
- We laugh a lot, we learn a lot and most importantly we know we are not alone.

In December 2009, BCS held what has become an annual event: a social evening for all the women associated with our six support groups. We were delighted when eighty women came through the doors at Domain Lodge. Will we have to look for a bigger venue this year! "Mr. Mystery" the magician, mystified the women as he pulled a full sized shovel out of a ladies' handbag and produced multiplying rabbits from his unsuspecting voluntary assistant's hands. Thank you to the committee for a scrumptious supper prepared and served with a smile.

BCS has a very high regard for the work done by the Cancer Society and is always pleased to support their fund raising venture, "Relay for Life". At Mt Smart this year, the women from BCS gladly helped with the distribution of the yellow T-shirts to men and women who had survived cancer and the sale of the memorial bags and candles. They also

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- *To become a Member of BCS, or to make a donation to support our activities, please complete the form in this newsletter and post to us.*
- *For information about our support services, please contact us on 0800BreaCanSupport (0800 273 222) or visit our website and complete the Contact Us online enquiry form.*



“Your BCS Committee could do with some extra members. Have you considered giving of your talents to this charity?”



Would you like to become a Member of Breast Cancer Support, or make a donation to help us in our work? Please complete the form at right, or call us on 0800 273 222 for more information.

encouraged people to make paper chains with each link representing a year since diagnosis and hang them around the walls as symbols of hope. I was intrigued with one chain made from one colour and then changing to another after only a few links. “The first colour is for my primary cancer and the remaining links in the contrasting colour are for the years since I was diagnosed with metastatic cancer,” the creator of the chain informed me. Then she added with smiling pride, “Notice that there are considerably more links for the years since I was diagnosed with secondary cancer than there are for the original cancer and I'm feeling fine.” I was honoured too, to be asked to read the “Survivors’ Oath” and cut the ribbon to start off the Relay. As a survivor I represented all those who have had a brush with cancer, those who have fully recovered, those who are undergoing treatment and those who have not survived the savage attack of this ugly aggressor. As I read, I felt that in some way I was especially standing there for the women I have met through BCS. I was both humbled and inspired.

In May we have another Workshop planned for the Coordinators and their helpers. Is there anything you would like to bring to the attention of the coordinators? Let us know.

Enclosed with this newsletter is your membership renewal. Be assured BCS values your financial support.

Your BCS committee could do with some extra members. Have you considered giving of your talents to this charity? Indicate on the membership form that you are interested in discussing this possibility. We'll be glad to talk without pressuring you.

I expect 2010 to be a very fruitful year for BCS. The brochure will be printed very soon as will the business cards. All six support groups are running well under capable leadership and newly diagnosed women are regularly coming along.

Enjoy the sunny March weather and have a safe and restful Easter break.

Kind regards, Marie Goudge
Chairperson, Breast Cancer Support Inc

Supporting BCS ...

BCS gratefully acknowledges the support of our members and donors and wishes to thank the JR McKenzie Trust, NZ Lotteries Commission, COGS and Zonta for their donations towards our work in 2010.

Would you like to become a member of Breast Cancer Support or make a donation? Please complete this form below and post back to us at Breast Cancer Support, PO Box 10150, Dominion Rd, Auckland 1446, or call us on 0800BreaCanSupport (0800 273 222) for more information. Thank you!

Name

Address.....

..... Phone (0)

Email Mob

My membership/donation is enclosed: Individual membership (\$20) Group (\$30)

Unwaged (\$15) Joint (\$30) I enclose a donation of \$.....

I am a breast cancer survivor I would like to volunteer - please contact me

Please contact us for further information on 0800 BreaCanSupport (0800 273 222) or email us on info@breastcancersupport.co.nz.

How your donation helps BCS

As with all non-profit organisations, Breast Cancer Support relies heavily on the funds it is awarded by Trusts and funding bodies and from the donations we receive from our Members, other organisations and individual supporters.

The money we receive from Memberships and private donations goes directly into providing our core services to women experiencing breast cancer. These funds support the running of our groups—venue hire, tea, coffee and biscuits for the morning or afternoon teas and are also applied towards the regular training programmes we offer our Group Coordinators and Volunteers. Such donations also contribute towards the production of our quarterly newsletter, helping to pay for printing and distribution costs.

This is why your support is so important to us because every dollar donated goes towards helping women find the support they need to cope with a new or past diagnosis of breast cancer. We feel, as do you, that no woman should have to cope alone—and sometimes there is nothing more comforting than to sit down with another woman who has been there too and who understands.

So we thank you for your support and invite you to renew your BCS Membership or to become a Member or supporter. Your kindness has enabled us to help many women on their way—and we hope you will continue to walk with us as we work together to help those who follow.

Participation in clinical trials—a personal perspective

Why I chose to participate in a clinical trial by Rosemary Geard

(This item follows on from our article about clinical trials in the December Newsletter, written by Jenni Scarlet, Research Nurse, Breast Care Centre, Waikato Hospital)

I'm one of those people who shortly after the shock of receiving a breast cancer diagnosis, went to the library and got out half the books on breast cancer and started reading. It was important to me to be educated with regard to my treatment options and all of a sudden, my vocabulary grew with big words I wish I never had reason to use.

For me, the subject of actually participating in a clinical trial first came up post-surgery when I met with Oncology for the first time. I was already familiar with the Australia New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group website (www.anzbctg.org) and had an idea of what trials were currently open to someone with my type of breast cancer and age - yes, I spent way too much time surfing the net after surgery! So, when I was asked if I would consider participating in a clinical trial, I was open to the idea.

Due to a pre-existing medical condition, I was immediately ruled out of one open trial and I signed up for another. The consent form was long, and yes, I did read it all before signing. There were questionnaires, blood tests and injections and I will be monitored for five years. But there was already cancer paperwork, being a human pin cushion and five-year monitoring, so why not throw a bit more into the mix?



Your donations help support Group Coordinator training programmes and enable us to assist many women on their breast cancer journey.



Participation in clinical trials—a personal perspective (cont.)

For more information about clinical trials for breast cancer treatments, visit the Australia New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group website at www.anzbctg.org

It is because of those women who trod this road before me, who choose to participate in trials, that there are now breast conservation surgery options available when previously the only option was a mastectomy, or the availability of the less-invasive sentinel node biopsy or the advancements in chemotherapy drug regimes to minimise side effects and increase life expectancy. It is only because of clinical trials, that what is now considered the gold standard of care, is available.

Even since I finished chemotherapy a year and a half ago, the frequency/dosage regime of one of the chemotherapy drugs I was on has changed, and from anecdotal discussions from women on the new regime, they aren't experiencing the side-effects I went through.

Participating in a clinical trial is a personal decision. Through the crappy hand that I've been dealt, I am contributing to medical knowledge that will help others in the future.

Breast Friends - News from our Support Groups

All six groups celebrated another year of support and friendship with special Christmas lunches in November and December 2009. These are always special occasions to have fun and enjoy the spirit of fellowship that exemplifies the BCS Breast Friends groups. Groups begin their official New Year in February but often Breast Friends will meet for an informal social 'catch up' in January.

Auckland Central

Auckland Central met in January and thirteen ladies enjoyed afternoon tea and a time for sharing, caring, chatting and eating! At the February meeting, women listened to a helpful and informative talk from Annaliese Jones, a Naturopath and Medical Herbalist from Elementa. She emphasised the need for quality foods in a high fibre diet, deep sea fish, nuts and daily servings of fermented whole soy foods. In March, a guest speaker from the Film Archives showed the group some footage from the days of silent film, raising some laughs about fashions, hats and gloves!

Hibiscus Coast

Hibiscus Coast Breast Friends met informally in January to exchange summer holiday stories and news. At the February meeting, women were encouraged to participate in the Cancer Society Relay for Life, the Busting With Life dragon boat team and an upcoming YWCA Encore programme being held in Orewa. Group Coordinators also discussed the Annual Survey of the Breast Friends Groups where members are asked to offer feedback on the running of the group and activities. Cancer Society Liaison Nurse Lyn Meurant spoke about psychosocial services available at Domain Lodge and the meeting concluded with a social discussion and catch up.

West Auckland

An unofficial coffee morning was held in January and in February the group met for the New Year at their usual venue, the Henderson Plunket Rooms, only to be found they were locked out! Undeterred – and in the true spirit of Breast Friends – the meeting was held on the front lawn. It was a beautiful evening, some of the ladies had folding chairs and others perched on the steps to enjoy good conversation, laughter and fellowship. The running of the group for 2010 was discussed and it was agreed that three ladies would now assist Coordinator Marie with the group organisation.



West Breast Friends enjoyed an 'open air' meeting in February.

Breast Friends - News from our Support Groups

North Shore

The North Shore Breast Friends met for their first 2010 meeting in February and enjoyed a great start to 2010 with everyone feeling very positive about the year ahead. The guest speaker was Laughing Yoga instructor Mohinder Anand. Laughing Yoga is a wonderful, fun way to exercise and everyone participated enthusiastically and with much merriment! Putting it simply, Mohinder's message was 'Laughter is the best medicine' which everyone agreed was true. In March, Pink Pilates instructor Megan Clarke took the group through some gentle stretches and breathing exercises. The session provided an introduction to Pink Pilates, a popular programme for women who have experienced breast cancer.

Pakuranga

The Pakuranga East group had the first 2010 meeting in February to set up the annual plan and confirm group leadership. Meeting topics were set for the next seven months and a craft evening is planned for March, facilitated by one of the group members. Some of the ladies were attending the Relay for Life Cancer Society fund raiser so preparations were made for this event. The group spent time playing a very short game of 'pair matching' which was a bit noisy and then had supper and a long chat about many things. At the end of the meeting, a lady attending for the first time said "I will be back! This was fun!"

Auckland South

In February, the Auckland South group listened to Jackie who spoke about her radiotherapy in Abu Dhabi. Jackie, aged 37, was diagnosed last year while in New Zealand on a short break. Her oncologist was very impressed with the operation she had in New Zealand. As there are only two Emirates that have radiotherapy clinics, both private, Jackie chose to go to Abu Dhabi. Her oncologist at the clinic was trained in America and had also worked in England. Jackie received treatment similar to regimes offered in New Zealand, travelling 1.5 hours each way to attend the clinic for treatment. Towards the end her employer put on a vehicle and driver for her! In March, the group will host Noel from Laughing Yoga.

New brochure due soon!



BCS has been working with Auckland Designer Marion Morris from Red Apple Design to develop a new look brochure and business cards— the final proofs are being reviewed and it is hoped the finished products will be available in early April. BCS members participated in a special photo shoot for the brochure last October. The afternoon at Marie's house became quite the social occasion with women coming from as far north

as Warkworth and Pukekohe in the south to attend.

"We're really looking forward to having the brochure out there," said Marie. "It has been a long while in the planning but as they say, good things are worth the wait."

It is hoped the brochure will raise the profile and public visibility of BCS and copies will be placed in hospitals, clinics and health centres throughout Auckland City.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Breast Cancer Support Inc.



North Shore Breast Friends enjoyed some Laughing Yoga with Mohinder Anan.

*"I will be back!
This was fun!"
From a new attendee at the East Breast Friends Group.*



Would you like to join a Support Group? Phone us on 0800 273 222 for information about a group in your area, nationwide.

A Poem by Pat Donovan



Pat Donovan has written a number of poems about her experience with breast cancer.

She has recently published them as a collection and has kindly offered to donate proceeds from book sales to BCS.

If you would like to order a copy of Pat Donovan's collection of inspirational and humorous poems, please contact BCS on 0800 273 222 for details. Each book costs \$10 (plus postage).

Your purchase will help BCS in its work to support women experiencing breast cancer—and we know you will enjoy this wonderful collection of poems from Pat!

The Dreaded Diagnosis

When breast cancer is mentioned
The one thing that we fear
Is that the diagnosis means
Our breasts might disappear!

For from that first occasion
When they started to appear
They were like a rite of passage;
Femininity was here.

They seemed to help attract the boys
And this amazed us so.
We couldn't understand just why
They held their interest so.

But as we got quite used to them,
We learned their strange attraction,
And when they fed our babies
Felt a sense of satisfaction.

As we grew a little older
And they lost some of their style
We didn't mind this very much -
For they'd been around a while.

So if you get the dreaded news
That one or both must go,
Don't be ashamed to shed some tears.
Or fear that friends will know.

Gather your loved ones to you,
This is something they can share,
And let them show their feelings,
Let you know how much they care.

Life is a very precious thing
And if that journey makes it last
Then it isn't such an awful thing
So to this thought hold fast

On reflection if you feel that you
Don't want the flattened look.
Then with a plastic surgeon
An appointment you may book.

He may not quite replace what's lost
But at least you'll feel complete!
And with all the many breasted girls
You'll be able to compete.

If reconstruction's not for you
The news is still not bad,
There are lovely bras to choose from
So please don't be too sad

I hope this poem helps you!
For it has done its job for me.
For in writing it I understood
What this news has meant to me.

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"Gather your loved ones to you, this is something they can share, and let them show their feelings, let you know how much they care..."