

Newsletter

Edition 51 | Summer – Autumn 2024

Paying it forward

“Being part of a breast cancer clinical trial was like paying it forward. It will benefit people in the future. Maybe even my grandchildren.”

Family is everything for Debbie, who beams when she talks about her five children, thirteen grandchildren and her great-grandson. *“They run me ragged,”* says Debbie, *“But I’m just so grateful to be here with them.”*

For Debbie, it was only natural that she thought of her family first when she received a diagnosis of Ductal Carcinoma in Situ (DCIS) in 2007.

After noticing a small but sore lump in her breast, Debbie went



Debbie hopes her participation in a clinical trial will help women diagnosed with breast cancer in the future – just like her sister.

to see her doctor on her 49th birthday. Following a mammogram, ultrasound and biopsy in the following days, Debbie couldn’t quite believe the results.

DCIS is a pre-cancerous change, where abnormal cells are present in milk ducts, but haven’t yet spread to surrounding tissue. It’s critical to remove these cells through surgery before they turn into cancer. Women diagnosed with DCIS are at a higher risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer in the future.

“I didn’t tell anybody about the diagnosis because we were going away for four days to the Gold Coast, and I didn’t want to ruin that for my husband and the kids,” says Debbie.

Debbie became one of 178 Australian and New Zealand participants on our worldwide IBIS-II DCIS clinical trial, which ran from 2005 – 2012.

This trial aimed to find out which of two hormone-blocking medications, Tamoxifen or Anastrozole, were better at preventing breast cancer or future DCIS developing.

Twelve-year follow up showed that both drugs are similarly effective, but have very different side effects. Tamoxifen showed



Debbie’s two daughters and several granddaughters are some of the reasons she chose to participate in a clinical trial.

fewer fractures and strokes, while Anastrozole showed a lower rate of endometrial and ovarian cancer.

This knowledge can help patients and clinicians decide which drug is best for their personal circumstances.

Debbie says she finds it gratifying to know that her participation in a clinical trial more than 12 years ago continues to advance how we treat and prevent breast cancer.

As difficult as her experience was, she still counts herself lucky.

“I hope no one else in my family ever gets breast cancer. But if they do – I know clinical trials will help. And maybe by being part of a trial, I’ll have helped too.”

Chair's update

I'm delighted to share with you in this newsletter, the results of two important clinical trials which were made possible by your generosity.

Our Neo-N clinical trial has shown that over half of the early-stage, triple negative breast cancer patients who participated in this immunotherapy trial, had no evidence of cancer in their breast and lymph nodes at surgery following treatment. This is remarkable and we will soon commence the next phase of the trial to build on this new knowledge.

Our PROSPECT clinical trial has shown that for women with low-risk early breast cancer, the use of breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) prior to breast surgery may be able to identify patients who can safely avoid radiotherapy. This means less physical and psychological impacts for patients and thousands of dollars saved in healthcare costs.

Clinical trials research is the proven pathway to getting new breast cancer treatments and strategies to those who need them. It is not possible without our dedicated researchers who strive to answer the critical questions needed to save and improve lives.

It is not possible without people like Debbie. The treatments available today and which are saving lives, are because people like her participate in clinical trials.

It is not possible without you, our donors. Your generosity and commitment drive change and impacts people in Australia and throughout the world.

Thank you to the 8,000 people who participated in our walking event in July last year. I was moved, as were my fellow Board members, by your stories and images, and by the wonderful enthusiasm and genuine care you showed each other.

I'm also very grateful for the heartfelt messages you sent at Christmas time to those going through breast cancer. Thank you for your words of encouragement, hope and understanding as they navigate the days, weeks and months ahead.

It's estimated that 57 people will be diagnosed with breast cancer each day this year. Together, we will be there for them. Thank you for helping to protect their dreams, hopes and futures.

Sunil Lakhani

**Professor Sunil Lakhani
Board Chair,
Breast Cancer Trials (BCT)**



IN MEMORIAM

We gratefully acknowledge gifts received up to 29 November 2023 in memory of:

Mrs Margaret Adams	Mrs Mary Corcoran	Mr Michael Hopton	Mrs Joanne McIntosh	Ms Claire Remond
Mrs Bev Adamson	Ms Janna Culmone	Mrs Rita Howard	Mrs Robyn McLaren	Mrs Rosemary Ricketts
Mrs Maria Agostini	Mr Carlos Da Silva Rosa	Mrs Carey Howard	Ms Stella McLeod	Mrs Marion Rigden
Mrs Irene Gilda Anderson	Mrs Karen Dahlstrom	Mrs Katie Hronsky	Mrs Jane McLoughlin	Mrs Carol Rolfe
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GIFTS IN WILLS

We gratefully acknowledge gifts received from the following supporters and offer our condolences to their families:

The Late Maria Teresa Grosso

The Late Pamela Dorothy Walker

The Late Anne C McMullen

The Late Kathleen Lydia Fairweather

Your kindness means so much to Molly

Your generosity at Christmas is having the most incredible impact on breast cancer research.

Thanks to your support, we have been able to raise more than \$265,000 towards important clinical trials, such as our Neo-N trial extension, which means the world to women like Molly. Thank you so much.

Molly was only 33 years old and had just given birth to her second daughter when she was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer. At a time her family should have been celebrating new life, Molly was faced with the real possibility of losing hers and not being around to see her children grow up.

Thanks to your kindness, Molly was able to participate in our Neo-N clinical trial. Molly, along with many other women, had a positive outcome because of this trial. You can find more information on those exciting outcomes in your Research Update on page 4.

It's so inspiring to see women like Molly being given a second chance at life, as a result of the clinical trials you make possible. We simply couldn't continue our research without you.

Thank you also for the many thoughtful messages of hope and strength written to women going through treatment for breast cancer over the holiday season. We wish we could share them all, but here are just a few...

To those facing breast cancer this Christmas...

I wish you peace, strength and hope. May you return to full health. Please know our thoughts and prayers are with you as you face this challenge. – **Joséphine**

Be brave, stay positive. There is always hope. Make the most of your special time with family and friends. – **Roswitha**

There is hope, love and support standing beside you, even though you can't see us, we are there. – **Mervyn**

Keep smiling! I was diagnosed on Christmas Eve, 15 years ago. I am grateful for all the trials. – **Dorothy**

Your fight is our fight. We are with you all of the way. – **Kaye**

Dear Molly, You will have many more Christmases with your delightful family. I had breast cancer in 2005, then again in 2014 and I'm still here at 80! – **Barbara**



The perfect diary for every woman



Thank you to everyone who has purchased a copy of our 2024 Health Diary (even Santa helped)!

There are still copies available and special prices on offer for wonderful supporters like you. Your diary order can be included with your online donation or purchased through our merchandise page using the QR code below or at www.breastcancertrials.org.au. Alternatively, you can call **1800 423 444**.

We also want to give a special mention to our ongoing partners **The Australian Women's Weekly**, newsagents nationally, **Australia Post**, **Woolworths**



and **Interflora Australia** who are all once again supporting the Australian Women's Health Diary.

We can't thank them enough for their ongoing support and commitment to breast cancer trials research.

Scan here to purchase your diary online



Research updates

Your support is critical in helping further our research into better treatments and outcomes. These results show how your generosity continues to benefit people through new treatment approaches.

BREAKING NEWS: Neo-N trial shows 50% of patients are breast cancer free at surgery following treatment

Thanks to generous funding from you, our wonderful supporters, our Neo-N clinical trial has achieved ground-breaking results that will shape the way we treat early-stage triple negative breast cancer in the future.

Announced at the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium, the Neo-N clinical trial aimed to understand whether using an immunotherapy drug together with chemotherapy before surgery would be safe and effective in treating triple negative breast cancer. Our researchers looked to see whether adding immunotherapy could compensate for giving less chemotherapy and improve outcomes.

Results showed that over half of the early-stage triple negative breast cancer patients participating in the Neo-N clinical trial, had no evidence of cancer in the breast and lymph nodes at surgery following treatment.

The trial involved 108 women from 14 of our participating institutions in Australia, New Zealand and Italy.

Triple negative breast cancer accounts for 15% of all breast cancers. It's a more aggressive tumour with a faster growth rate, a higher risk of spreading to other parts of the body and a greater risk of recurrence.

Study Chair of our Neo-N clinical trial, Professor Sherene Loi, says the results are a significant step forward in providing more treatment options for patients.

"Triple negative breast cancer doesn't have any of the more common receptors that can be targeted by medications, such as hormone and HER2-blocking drugs, so it has fewer treatment options available."

"However, this 12-week chemo-immunotherapy treatment combination is a promising new treatment option, that has been very effective at eradicating the cancer in those patients."

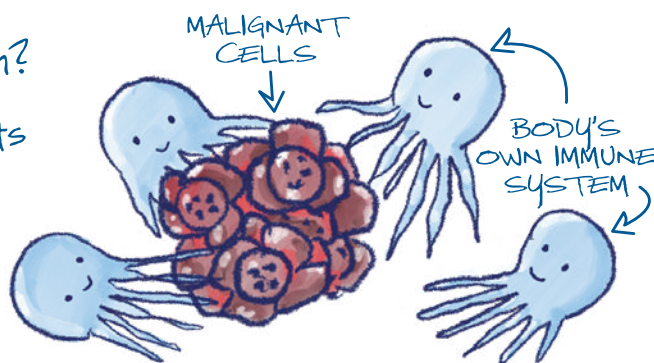
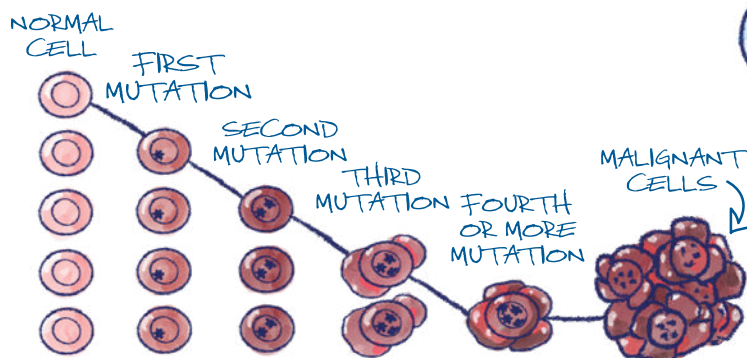
"Those patients in whom we see eradication of the cancer have a good prognosis."



Professor Sherene Loi
Study Chair of Neo-N
and Board Director at BCT

Did you know cancer cells mutate to avoid being captured by the body's immune system?

This is why we need research, so treatments can keep ahead of the cancer.



Immunotherapy boosts the body's own immune system to target and unmask hidden cancer cells and kill them. This combined with chemotherapy attacks the cancer on two fronts.

PROSPECT trial identifies patients who may safely receive less treatment

Our PROSPECT clinical trial, funded by generous supporters like you, is helping pave the way for people diagnosed with early low risk breast cancer to safely receive less intense treatment. This will mean fewer physical and psychological impacts for patients – all while maintaining a very low risk of cancer recurrence.

Radiation therapy is a standard recommendation after breast conserving surgery in most patients with early-stage breast cancer. While it reduces the risk of local recurrence, it is associated with potential side effects and financial burden.

By using a combination of breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and pathology findings prior to breast surgery, oncologists may be able to identify

early breast cancer patients who can safely avoid radiotherapy, thereby experiencing fewer side effects.

Professor Bruce Mann, says:

“PROSPECT has defined a role for preoperative MRI in identifying patients who can be considered for de-intensified treatment. The health economic analysis of PROSPECT and some parallel quality of life studies suggest that the use of an MRI in this way, may not only improve quality of life for patients but may also save resources overall and be highly cost-effective in Australia.”



Professor Bruce Mann
Study Chair of PROSPECT
and Director of Research
at BCT

New analysis from the IBIS-II trial can help patients at high risk of breast cancer

A new analysis of data from the IBIS-II Prevention trial has found that measuring the hormone oestrogen in the blood could identify which postmenopausal women at high risk of developing breast cancer, would benefit most from the breast cancer prevention drug anastrozole.

Dr Nicholas Zdenkowski is the BCT Study Chair of IBIS-II and says:

“This personalisation would allow for women to receive the medication that would offer them the best balance of managing breast cancer risk and side effects.”

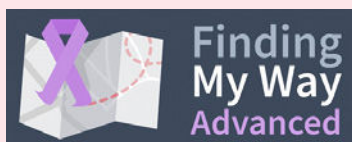
Research shows that postmenopausal women who have higher concentrations of the hormone oestrogen in their blood stream, are at higher risk of developing breast cancer.

Aromatase inhibitors stop the production of oestrogen and reduce the amount made in the body.

They are currently the most effective preventive agent for oestrogen-receptor positive breast cancer, but their utility could be increased by identifying those who stand to benefit most by taking these drugs.



Dr Nicholas Zdenkowski
Study Chair of IBIS-II
at BCT



Free information and support for women with metastatic breast cancer

Flinders University is offering free resources to women living with advanced/metastatic breast cancer, in the form of an interactive internet-based program or BCNA online resources.

These resources are offered as part of the Finding My Way – Advanced research study, with support from Cancer Australia and BCNA. Both resources are specifically designed to offer information and support to women living with metastatic breast cancer.

If you or someone you love is living with advanced/metastatic breast cancer, visit www.findingmywayadvanced.org.au or scan the QR code to access this new resource.

Study contact: Dr Emma Kemp at findingmyway@flinders.edu.au or 08 7421 9954.

Scan here to access this new resource



A clear way ahead

Over the 30 years I have been with Breast Cancer Trials, I have witnessed significant improvement in treatments and survival rates for many types of breast cancer. These changes have occurred because you and other compassionate people fund breast cancer clinical trials research. Today, we are in a very exciting era, one in which more and more breakthroughs are happening and progress is gathering pace.

A gift in your Will could help fuel the momentum and is a powerful way to reduce the impact of this disease.

I know that in one sense, our Wills are a functional necessity; they help tidy things up after we're gone. But of course, they are more than that; they're a reflection of what has mattered to us in our lives, who we love, what has touched us, and how we'd like the world to be changed by our presence in it.

What a future it will be when breast cancer no longer has the same power to take life or diminish it.

When families, plans, dreams and life ambitions – are unaffected by breast cancer. Where every person affected by breast cancer can see a clear way ahead.

You can help bring that future closer with a gift in your Will.

Your compassion and commitment is, as always, so deeply appreciated by me, our researchers and all those who benefit from the research you make possible.



Julie Callaghan,
Chief Operating Officer,
Fundraising and Philanthropy



If you would like more information, please email bequestenquiries@bctrials.org.au or call **1800 423 444**.

To leave a gift in your Will, the following wording should be used:

"I give to Breast Cancer Trials (ABN 64 051 369 496) to be applied for general purposes as determined by its Directors:

- *The residue of my estate (or _____% of the residue of my estate), or*
- *The whole of my estate (or _____% of my estate), or*
- *The sum of \$_____, or*
- *My asset/s listed (e.g. shares, real estate, etc)*

I declare that the receipt of an authorised officer of Breast Cancer Trials will be sufficient discharge to my executors who will not be bound to see the application of this gift."



Long-term supporters Geoff and Bev.

Hope for future generations

Breast cancer has impacted two generations in long-term supporter, Beverly's, family. *"It's not due to a genetic link, just sheer mathematics. Being female puts you at risk,"* says Bev.

Watching her sister, Barbara, lose her life to breast cancer is one of the reasons Bev has supported us since 1999. Her greatest wish is to find better ways to prevent and cure breast cancer before it has the chance to impact her great-grandchildren.

Bev's sister was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1995. Aged 66, Barbara underwent a mastectomy and lymph node removal. Unfortunately, a decade later, Barbara's breast cancer had metastasised (or spread) to her brain, followed by her bones and scalp.

Just two years ago, Bev's great-niece was diagnosed with HER2-positive breast cancer. Thankfully, she was able to benefit from new medication such as trastuzumab (Herceptin), which our HERA clinical trial found can significantly reduce the risk of this type of breast cancer returning.

Two years on, Bev shares that her great-niece feels positive about her future, and those of her young daughters, thanks to clinical trials research.

Bev says it gives her hope to see how far breast cancer prevention and treatment has come in the relatively short-time frame between her sister passing away, and her great-niece going through treatment.

"We have to find out why breast cancer happens, and we have to find out how to stop it," says Bev. *"And that takes research and funding."*

Thank you, Bev and Geoff, for your generosity. Like you, we know that better prevention and improved treatments for breast cancer can only happen through clinical trials, which are only possible with your support.

Supporters in action

'Remembering Tayla' high tea

Tayla was just 28 years old when she was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer in September 2019. Tragically, Tayla passed away in January 2022 at only 30 years of age.

Tayla's family (including her mother Kathy, her father Paul, sister Marnie, brother-in-law Mitch and precious nephew Max) held a fundraising high tea during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in memory of Tayla.

One of Tayla's wishes was for more research into this type of breast cancer to help stop others from going through her experience.

The high tea was a wonderful success, filled with raffles, auction items and plenty of laughs thanks to Kathy's good friend and comedian, Urzila Carlson. Kathy added some

beautiful touches on the day to remember Tayla, including lots of photos. The garden where the high tea was held is now known as Tayla's Garden to honour her.

Kathy also wrote and illustrated a beautiful book called 'Always By My Side' for Tayla's nephew Max, so he can get to know his Aunty Tayla although she is gone. Friends and family could also purchase the book to help raise funds.

Tayla's family, friends and the wider community supported the event raising \$14,235 for breast cancer research.

To Tayla's beautiful family, we are so grateful for your support, and so sorry for your loss. We have no doubt Tayla would be incredibly proud of what you have achieved.



Above: Tayla passed away from breast cancer at the age of 30.

Below: Tayla's family fundraised for BCT in her memory.



Aquafit fundraiser

Our wonderful supporter Ann-Maree made quite a splash by running an Aquafit fundraiser for Breast Cancer Trials just recently.

Aquafit is an aqua aerobics program Ann-Maree runs at Charlestown Pool in NSW. Her fundraiser included two classes, two morning teas, a raffle and the sale of clothing and pink swimming caps, which all the ladies wore with pride on the day.

The event raised a much-appreciated \$3,700 and everyone especially enjoyed when Barbie and Ken made an appearance.

Ann-Maree shared this beautiful poem with the Aquafit crew to commemorate the day.

A huge thank you to Ann-Maree and the Aquafit crew for your incredible and creative support!



Well, Aquafit Crew you've earned a standing ovation!

As Breast Cancer Trials receives our generous donation.

The Barbie & Ken masterclass was riotous fun, and the Aquafit pink caps will keep us safe from the sun.

If you bought tickets or clothing or made a donation, your support is received with much appreciation.

Breast Cancer Trials' motto is 'No more lives cut short by breast cancer', so let's continue our support to help find the answer.

Despite all the fun, the message is clear.

Research is vital and saves many lives each year.

With gratitude and thanks, I applaud you one and all.

Let's do it all again in 2024.

You made our inaugural 100km in July Challenge a huge success!

Last year, we launched our first '100km in July' Facebook fundraiser where we challenged participants to complete 100kms during the month of July to help bring hope to those impacted by breast cancer.

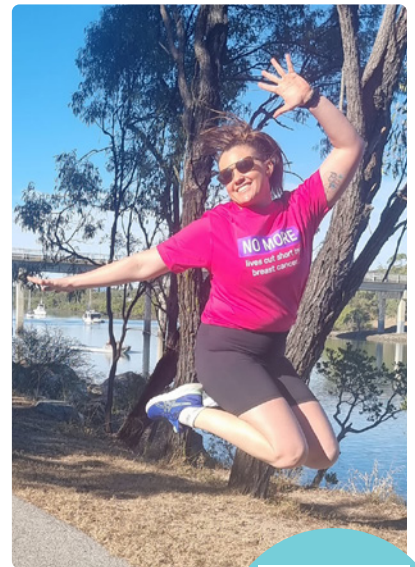
More than 8,000 people registered to take part in the challenge and as a result, an incredible \$957,920 was raised for breast cancer research. The difference this will make to our life-saving clinical trials research is enormous.

We are so deeply grateful to every single person who walked, ran, cycled, swam, and rolled in July to help raise these critical funds.

We were also thrilled to see thousands of participants wearing the free t-shirt and creating a wave of pink as we work towards a world where no more lives are cut short by breast cancer.

Thank you so much to those of you who participated in or donated to the 100km in July Challenge. New cures and better, kinder treatments are only possible with your support.

Interested in participating in future challenges? Be sure to keep an eye out on our Facebook and Instagram pages for updates!



Scan here to check out our Facebook page



Thank you to our wonderful golfers!

Thousands of women and men from over 100 clubs participated in our Tee Off fundraising initiative last year raising over \$250,000. Since Tee Off began in 1996, golf clubs throughout Australia have raised over \$3.3 million for Breast Cancer Trials.

The Sands Torquay were our highest fundraising golf club last year raising close to \$15,000 thanks to their wonderful members, committee, staff and sponsors.



East's Leisure & Golf's 25th Tee Off was a fabulous success!



The wonderful ladies of The Sands Torquay who were our top fundraising club last year!

We also want to give a special mention to East's Leisure & Golf who held their 25th Tee Off event in 2023 – they've raised over \$65,000 since 1997.

Thank you to all our wonderful supporters for helping making such a meaningful difference. We're so grateful for your ongoing commitment to "Teeing Off"!

Do you love playing golf? Would you like to help raise funds for breast cancer research? Find out how you can get involved at www.breastcancertrials.org.au



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