



BREAST CANCER RESEARCH TRUST

BrEaST *Bulletin*

June 2024

June marks the beginning of the 25th year of the Breast Cancer Research Trust (BCRT) enabling breast cancer research based in the Waikato region. The BCRT secures funding for international and national clinical trials. Trials are vital for assessing the safety and effectiveness of new surgical and radiotherapy techniques and drug treatments, and enhancing quality of life and introducing new technologies.

As a research nurse and clinical trial coordinator, I rely on many dedicated colleagues at Waikato Hospital to manage all aspects of a trial. Surgeons, Oncologists or Radiologists take on lead roles of Principal and Co-Investigators and regularly monitor women receiving new treatments. Their expertise and knowledge also support submission of applications to organisations such as Medsafe and the Health & Disability Ethics Committee. Multiple approvals must be obtained before a trial can commence enrolling participants.

Others I work alongside are Trial Pharmacists who support clinical trials with the dispensing and storage of new drug therapies. Laboratory staff ensure the processing of blood samples and tumour tissue before they are sent to international laboratories for analysis and research purposes. Medical Imaging staff ensure imaging is timely and adheres to protocols. Breast care specialist nurses ensure women considering trial participation at the time of their diagnosis are well supported. These are just some of the many dedicated staff who want the best for their patients.

BCRT staff have also worked alongside colleagues from the Breast Cancer Foundation New Zealand (NZ) to help establish the Te Rehita Mate Utaetae Breast Cancer Foundation National Register. From four standalone regional Registers in the early 2000s, NZ now has a truly National Register. This is an invaluable resource with data on all aspects of breast cancer in NZ. Register data is used for auditing of practice, for example, assessing timely diagnosis and treatment according to quality performance indicators.



Heartfelt thanks to all those who volunteered, donated or organised a pink-themed event over May that has raised funds for our work. We appreciate your generosity. You will help future generations diagnosed with breast cancer to have better outcomes with the availability of more effective therapies and treatment approaches.

Ngā mihi nui

Jenni Scarlet

BCRT Secretary & Breast Cancer Research Nurse

On behalf of the BCRT team

Lifesaving immunotherapy treatment closer to being funded

Not all breast cancers are the same. We now know there are different types, such as the more aggressive triple negative breast cancer. Triple negative means that these cancers don't have the usual receptors (oestrogen, progesterone and HER2). Around 10-15 % of breast cancers diagnosed in NZ women are triple negative.

Keytruda works with the immune system and when added to chemotherapy, clinical trials have shown that outcomes are significantly improved (for example, it helps some patients with advanced (incurable) breast cancer live longer). Pharmac's cancer advisors have recommended Keytruda (also known as pembrolizumab) be funded for both early and advanced triple negative breast cancer. This will provide these patients with an important treatment option.

Advocacy groups are urging Pharmac to give Keytruda funding priority and are advising the Government to increase Pharmac's budget to invest in life-saving drugs such as Keytruda.

Cancer Survivors' Day

Cancer Survivors' Day is a celebration of courage and survival, honouring those who have overcome cancer and supporting those in the fight. It's a time to acknowledge progress in cancer research and treatment.

In 2024, it aligns with King Charles's Birthday on June 3rd. King Charles has openly discussed his cancer journey, advocating for early detection and research investment. His public return emphasises the importance of continued research efforts.

As communities worldwide prepare to celebrate this significant day, they do so with the knowledge that every survivor's story is a beacon of inspiration, and each advancement in research is a step closer to a future where cancer may no longer be a life-threatening condition.

Supporting cancer research can be done by donating to research institutes, participating in fundraising events, or advocating for cancer awareness. Every contribution aid in advancing research and finding cures.

[Click here to donate to the Breast Cancer Research Trust](#)



BreastScreen Aotearoa Clinical Lead welcomes age extension plans

Earlier this year the Government announced steps toward extending free breast cancer screening to women aged 70-74. Currently only women aged 45-69 are eligible for free screening.

Implementation is still a while away - the health system needs time to prepare for the 60,000 additional women who will be eligible for screening each year. Health New Zealand will need to plan for the cancer treatment services required to support additional women who are diagnosed.

Clinical lead for BreastScreen Aotearoa and Waikato Surgeon, Dr Adam Stewart, is an avid supporter of the age extension and he has been advocating this for a long time. He believes women in their 70s still have a long life to live. Extending the age for free screening will mean more breast cancers will be detected earlier and complex treatments such as chemotherapy may be avoided.

Dr Stewart spoke to the Waikato Herald recently about the importance of screening and the age extension.

[CLICK HERE to read the full article](#)

Kirikiroa Marathon 2024

The Breast Cancer Research Trust expresses its heartfelt gratitude for being chosen by the Kirikiroa Marathon as a charity for online donations.

We wish all the runners and walkers the best of luck for Sunday 9 June! May your strides be strong, your spirits high, and your finish line moments unforgettable!

For more information visit the Kirikiroa Marathon website at

<https://www.kirikiroamarathon.co.nz/>

Photo: Celebrating the dedication of Heather Flay (right) and Jeanne van der Merwe (left) who ran in support of BCRT last year.



A touch of PINK: Celebrating fundraisers held in May

Throughout May, individuals and communities organised a variety of fundraisers to support our vital cause. Their efforts were nothing short of inspiring, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved, including:

- **Waikato Chamber of Commerce:** More photos can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/2d4rcynf>
- **Everest People**
- **Waipa Wranglers Line Dancing**
- **Kerry-Lea Barugh**

Every dollar raised brings us closer to our goal of gaining knowledge and saving lives. Thank you to everyone who organized, sponsored, supported, attended, and contributed in any way.

Together, we can make a difference.

With gratitude, The Breast Cancer Research Trust Team

CLICK HERE to receive more information on how you can fundraise for the Breast Cancer Research Trust



Buckets of Hope

Chartwell Shopping Centre in Hamilton shone with hope and generosity during our Annual Appeal from May 20-24.

Aligning with International Clinical Trials' Day, the Appeal underscored our Trust's commitment to gaining knowledge and saving lives. The event's triumph was evident not only in funds raised but also in the community spirit it ignited.

We thank our volunteers, donors, and Chartwell Shopping Centre for their steadfast support.

Missed donating at the Centre? Support us online for a lasting impact.

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE NOW](#)



Weaving the people together: celebrating National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week will be celebrated between 16 and 22 June.

A special shoutout to the incredible volunteers at the **Breast Cancer Research Trust** and the **Op Shop for Breast Cancer**. Your dedication and hard work do not go unnoticed.



**Here's to the everyday heroes,
The volunteers who do what they can,
To ease the suffering of others,
And be of service to their fellow people.**

**May they know the true satisfaction
That comes from helping others
Less fortunate than themselves,
But no less their sisters and brothers.**

**May they feel the gratitude in our hearts
For all of the good that they've done.
The appreciation that we all feel for them
Is truly second to none.**

Changes at the Op Shop for Breast Cancer

The Op Shop Pop Up for Breast Cancer will no longer be operating as a "stand alone" store behind our flagship store at 750 Victoria Street, Hamilton CBD.

The decision to use the space currently occupied by the Pop Op was not taken lightly, however, the main Op Shop store requires extra floor space as more bespoke retail areas are developed for our customers.

This is an exciting time for us and the Op Shop team as we grow our offerings and options for the community. We assure you that it will be much more of the same great items at the same great prices. We really look forward to customers popping in and having a look around our new display rooms!

[CLICK HERE to visit the OP Shop for Breast Cancer Facebook Page](#)





BIG Cheers!

We're over the moon to share that our joint venture has clinched the WasteMINZ award in the **Best Initiative to Reduce Waste or Redesign Products** category!

A salute to our teams' relentless spirit in championing sustainability. A heartfelt nod to our allies at Hamilton City Council, Hospice Waikato, Go Eco, and the Op Shop for Breast Cancer, with a special mention to Benedikt for his video magic—can't wait for the big reveal!

Kudos to the Op Shop squad, Belinda from Hamilton City Council, and Teresa from Hospice for their priceless camaraderie.

And a high-five to Tauranga City Council, our co-winner, for their stellar Resource Wise Programme.

Together, we're paving the way for change, step by step.



Connect with us!

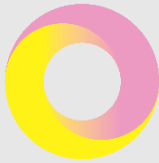
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**Breast Cancer
Research Trust**

Gaining Knowledge. Saving Lives.

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