



BREAST CANCER RESEARCH TRUST

# BrEaST *Bulletin*

January/February 2025

Happy New Year and wishing you all the best for 2025! We hope you have been able to relax with loved ones over the festive season and spend time recharging.

There is a lot happening on the research front in 2025. Several clinical trials and studies are completing and final analyses getting underway. This includes the “Suppression of Ovarian Suppression Trial” and the “Advanced breast cancer patient reported outcomes” study. See below “ABCpro study”.

The initial analyses will commence for the “Lymph node grafting for treatment of arm lymphoedema” and “Examining personalised radiation therapy for low-risk early breast cancer or EXPERT” trials. It can take many months for researchers to analyse data from large numbers of participants and to write up the results.

We have begun recruitment for two new clinical trials, the OPTIMA trial (see below) and the CAMBRIA-2 trial. The CAMBRIA-2 trial is introducing a new drug called Camizestrant for those diagnosed with high-risk hormone receptor positive breast cancer. The hope is that with better treatment of early breast cancer, we will have fewer women being diagnosed with incurable/advanced breast cancer in the future.

We are always inspired by the many health professional colleagues our research team works alongside. Surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, breast cancer specialist nurses and mammographers, admin and reception staff are special and dedicated people who make a real difference to those diagnosed with breast cancer every day. Many of our doctor, nurse and other colleagues go “above and beyond” in caring for patients through difficult times.

Thanks very much to those of you who continue to support our cause through fundraising, donating, attending events, volunteering, being involved with the Op Shop for Breast Cancer and other ways. These valued efforts continue to help improve breast cancer care and treatment through research.

Ngā mihi nui

**The BCRT team - Jenni, Hina, Cindy, Jane, Kimberley, Danielle & Ian**

---

### **Advanced breast cancer patient reported outcomes study**

*Long title "Patient reported outcome measures for individualised symptom evaluation and management in advanced breast cancer study". Short title "ABCpro study"*

This study set out to evaluate the effect of an electronic symptom management system using weekly patient reported outcome measure surveys, with advanced breast cancer (ABC) specialist nurse support, on quality of life and unscheduled hospital care in patients diagnosed with ABC.

In December the ABCpro study completed follow-up of women taking part. We acknowledge the wonderful support of colleagues at the Breast Cancer Foundation NZ for funding, set-up, project management, analysis and much more. Crucial to the study was the work of Waikato Hospital staff Dr Marion Kuper (Medical Oncologist and lead/principal researcher), Donna Alexander who is our wonderful ABC nurse, and BCRT Research Nurse Jenni Scarlet who was the study coordinator.

We already know from initial study results that participating women found the weekly online survey was easy to use for reporting their symptoms and side effects. The tool/technology alerted the ABC nurse to symptom issues and helped patients feel they could carry on their life "as normal", with some control over their symptoms while knowing support was available when needed. These factors reduced anxiety and improved quality of life, and enabled ABC patients to maintain a positive mind-set.

The weekly online patient surveys were shown to be an effective and valuable strategy for providing timely feedback to the Oncology team. This meant better patient engagement, stronger relationships between the patient and whānau and the Oncology team and resulted in better overall care.

The final results of this study are due in 2025. The "ABCpro study" has now been transitioned into an "ABCpro service" at Waikato Hospital and includes a part-time funded ABC nurse position.

## Celebrating 25 years of research excellence!

The BCRT celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2025! We're planning to celebrate but can't spill all the details just yet. We will let you know the details as soon as we can.

### Here are some exciting highlights to look forward to:

**February:** Follow our socials to read heartwarming stories from trial participants. You'll also have the chance to spread 'love' to patients who make our research possible.

**April:** Spin-The-Wheel extravaganza, a fun-filled experience with exciting surprises.

**May:** Support our annual appeal and International Clinical Trials Day (observed on May 20th). We'll also need the assistance of volunteers so keep an eye on our socials for more information.

**October:** Take part in Paint Waikato Pink and the Pink Walk & Run to raise awareness for breast cancer research.

Stay updated with our latest news by following us on social media. Let's make 2025 a year to remember!

[Click here to connect with us on FACEBOOK](#)

[Click here to connect with us on INSTAGRAM](#)

[Click here to connect with us on LINKEDIN](#)

## Waikato Hospital enrolls first NZ patient in the international OPTIMA trial

*Long title "Optimal Personalised Treatment of early breast cancer using Multi-parameter Analysis" (short title "OPTIMA" trial)*

This is a large international clinical trial which aims to enrol 4800 participants and will find out if using a specialised laboratory gene test (called a Prosigna assay) on breast cancer tissue can help Medical Oncologists and their patients make safe and accurate decisions about whether or not chemotherapy treatment is needed.

The Prosigna assay is a means of identifying those patients with hormone receptor positive and HER2 negative high risk for recurrent breast cancer, who are likely to benefit from chemotherapy, while sparing those who are unlikely to do so from an unnecessary and unpleasant treatment. This trial is



coordinated internationally by the University College London and coordinated in Australia and New Zealand by Breast Cancer Trials.

***Research Nurses Hina (left) & Jenni (right) received Otto the koala for being the first NZ site to enrol a patient in the OPTIMA trial.***

### **A new approach to imaging**

Toward the end of 2024 Waikato Hospital obtained approvals to become a referral site for a Mercy Radiology (Epsom, Auckland) led research study. This is called the “LUMINA study” and is evaluating a new type of CT scan for women diagnosed with a locally advanced type of breast cancer called invasive lobular breast cancer. The new type of CT scan is called a FAPI PET (Fibroblast Activation Protein Inhibitor Positron Emission Tomography) CT scan.

Invasive lobular breast cancer arises in the lobules of the breast and is more difficult to see on standard imaging such as mammogram, ultrasound or standard CT scans. Using a “one size fits all” radiology approach may not stage invasive lobular breast cancer accurately. Staging determines treatment decisions, for example, whether chemotherapy or hormonal therapy is given before or after surgery.

Dr Remy Lim, Radiologist & Medical Director of Mercy Radiology in Auckland is Principal/lead researcher for the Lumina study. The study is funded by a Breast Cancer Foundation NZ grant.

BCRT Research Nurse Jenni Scarlet has supported the set-up of Waikato Hospital as a referral site for this study.

### **Genetics of breast cancer in the Waikato region study**

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of breast cancer. Genetic changes (mutations) in a specific region of DNA known as the oestrogen receptor alpha gene are thought to be associated with resistance to hormone therapy. Currently, there is limited information about the incidence and implication of these mutations with respect to treatment. This University of Waikato pilot study aims to develop a genetic test to determine the mutation status, the recurrence-free interval, and overall breast cancer survival of 80 Waikato breast cancer patients. Results may help

the selection of treatments for future hormone-positive breast cancer patients as a prognostic indicator.

BCRT staff have helped enable approvals for this University of Waikato based research. The study has received grant funding from the Gallagher Charitable Trust, which will enable the purchase of laboratory items required. Lead researchers are Dr Linda Peters (Senior Lecturer in Molecular Biology, University of Waikato) and Dr Archana Pandita (Consultant Histopathologist, Pathlab and Waikato Hospital).

### **BreastScreen Aotearoa programme is now 25 years old!**

The BreastScreen Aotearoa (BSA) programme has now been in existence for 25 years! Over the past 25 years BSA has provided more than five million free screening mammograms to NZ women. BSA currently provides free mammograms for women aged 45 – 69. The age extension is coming and there will be a phased roll-out later in 2025 of breast screening for women aged 70-74 years. The risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer doesn't stop at 69 and this age extension will mean more women will have their cancers found earlier with less radical treatment needed.

Early detection saves lives! To enrol in BSA call 0800 270 200 or click on the link below to register online.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER ONLINE](#)

### **Know about the Te Rēhita Mate Ūtaetae Breast Cancer Foundation National Register?**

The Register has been operating for over 20 years. It is a confidential collection of information vital for doctors, researchers and health planners to understand breast cancer better. Information is used for research and audits, and also service planning. Learnings from research studies and analysis of data have led to steady improvements in breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and outcomes. More than 4,000 new patient cases are added to the Register each year. All patients diagnosed with pre-invasive and invasive breast cancer from Northland to Southland are included in the Register. More than 99% are included (less than 1% opt out).

Our staff work closely with Breast Cancer Foundation staff on the Register. We are currently preparing for the next Register report.

register is a taonga (treasure) benefiting future generations diagnosed with breast cancer.

[Click here if you would like to view a copy of the previous register report  
“30,000 voices: Informing a better future for breast cancer in Aotearoa New Zealand”](#)

### Feeling inspired to make a real difference in 2025?

We're brimming with fundraising ideas that will support vital breast cancer research and bring hope to our communities. Let's create a brighter future together with these fun and impactful events:

**Espress(o) Your Support:** Host a coffee, brunch, or bake sale. Coffee, cake, and good company – what's not to love?

**Pink Walks:** Organize a stroll in your local park. All you need is some community spirit and a dash of pink!

**BrEaST Friends:** Gather your friends and raise funds and awareness.

**Boobie Book Club:** Combine your love for books and fundraising. Start a book club where proceeds from book sales or club fees go to the Trust!

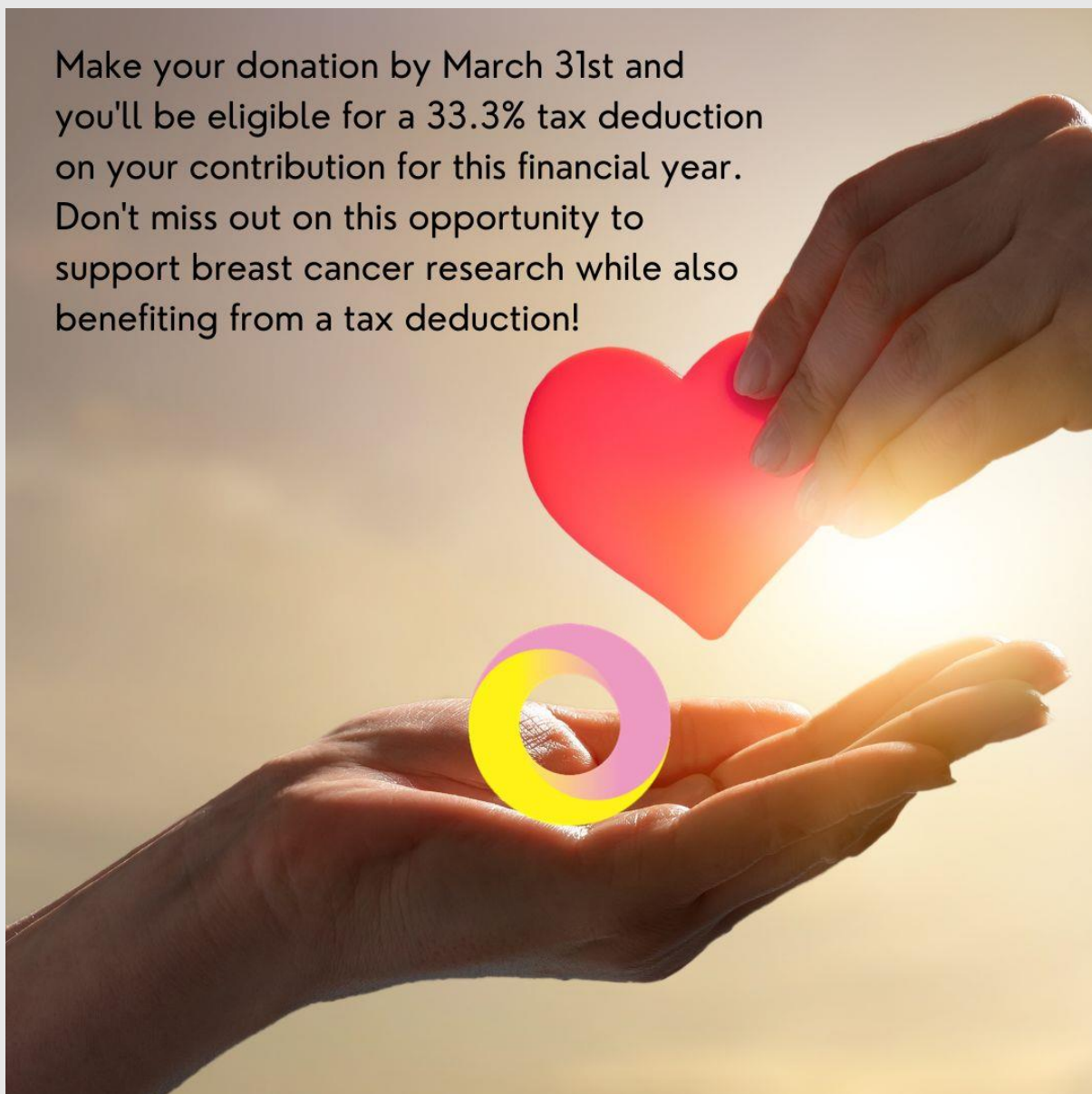
**Go The Extra Mile:** Participate in a sports event, be it a run, marathon, or obstacle race, and use it as a platform to raise funds.

**Corporate Partnerships:** Nominate the Breast Cancer Research Trust as your company's 'Charity of the Year' or organise an event in your workplace.

Every action counts when it comes to shaping a brighter future and bringing us closer to a cure. Get involved and help us make a significant difference! Ready to take the next step?

[Click here to get in touch with us today to book your fundraiser!](#)

Make your donation by March 31st and you'll be eligible for a 33.3% tax deduction on your contribution for this financial year. Don't miss out on this opportunity to support breast cancer research while also benefiting from a tax deduction!



**M** 022 131 1303

**E** [Cindy.Jacobs@breastcancerresearch.org.nz](mailto:Cindy.Jacobs@breastcancerresearch.org.nz)

**W** [www.breastcancerresearch.org.nz](http://www.breastcancerresearch.org.nz)