

# Newsletter

## Volume 17 – June 2016

[www.stgeorgescancerinstitute.co.nz](http://www.stgeorgescancerinstitute.co.nz)



**ST GEORGE'S**  
CANCER INSTITUTE  
*(Registered Charitable Trust)*

### Greetings

This newsletter comes with the news that we now have one of the upgraded linear accelerators operating in the new building and the second in the final stages of calibration and recommissioning. It is expected it will be fully operational within the next couple of weeks. The upgraded machines are capable of administering Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy (SABR) treatments. The treatment uses high doses of radiation to target small tumours with less damage to surrounding areas.

The Trust continues to be busy and we have visited Wanaka in November and Queenstown in March to conduct information evenings on new treatments, drugs etc. Both evenings were well attended and the guests were very enthusiastic about the presentation and the information they received.

We wish to thank John and Miranda Guthrie for hosting us in a superb manner in Queenstown in their lovely house and grounds. This was very much appreciated.



We are still conducting information evenings in the Cancer Care Centre to various groups including corporates. These tours start with a drink and some delectable nibbles from our Executive Chef and his Food Services team followed by a tour of the facility with one of our Radiation Oncologists explaining cancer, treatments and a great opportunity to ask questions is provided. Feedback shows people leave with a better understanding and feeling about cancer. If you are a member of a group who would like to visit the Centre please contact me on 021 662 195 or Dawn on 0-3-375 6013 or 027 432 3371.

The Institute continues to fundraise to provide financial, physiotherapy, psychosocial and dietary support.

Here's to a mild winter.

**Cilla Glasson**  
Chair, Cancer Institute Trustees Limited and Fundraising Committee

### Update from CEO, St George's Hospital



The new above ground linear accelerator bunker building is almost complete and patients are being treated in the new facility. It has been a long journey following the earthquakes to get to this stage and we are proud of the

environment. The landscaping will be completed in the next few weeks and as the 'green wall' grows the new facility will blend into the peaceful surroundings of the gardens.



The recent conference/workshop on Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy (SABR) co-hosted between St George's Cancer Care Centre and the Canterbury DHB went very well with 70 participants from around New Zealand. The SABR treatment offering is one more step forward in cancer treatments for patients with specific requirements.

**Greg Brooks**  
Chief Executive Officer, St George's Hospital

### From a Patient's Perspective

"Cancer" was always a word with which I felt uncomfortable, and so it was unwelcome news to be diagnosed with inoperable grade 4 throat cancer just a week before Christmas.

Only the week before, I had received a clearance in respect of an earlier problem with prostate cancer and a subsequent prostatectomy. I understand that there was no connection between the two forms of cancer.

My experience with throat cancer started with a visit to the 24-hour Surgery on a Saturday afternoon complaining of a persistent sore throat. After progressing through the triage nurse and medical examiner to the duty doctor I was informed that "this is serious and you urgently need to see a specialist".

"Urgently" meant lining up at the local GP rooms on the Monday morning, and the GP through sheer persistence, and despite the pending Christmas closures, arranged an appointment with an ENT specialist the following day. The specialist in turn paved the way for further tests and had me in Christchurch Public Hospital on the morning before Christmas Day for a full biopsy procedure.

Once the extent of the cancer was confirmed, arrangements were quickly put in place for my treatment. Perhaps it is a male shortcoming, but throughout my life I had been somewhat wary of hospitals and "things medical", despite the fact that in the late 1980s I was involved in the government-led health reforms as a member of the Crown Health Enterprises Advisory Committee. I later became a board member of Healthcare Otago and spent a little over a year as chairman of that entity prior to relocating to Christchurch.

The health industry faces huge challenges with an insatiable demand for services and a limited ability to fund those demands. I recall the challenges, frustrations and tensions faced by board, management and the health professionals in trying to reconcile the clinical wishes and demands against the budgetary constraints. Little has changed over the years in that respect, despite the massive leaps forward in medical technology and procedures.

I well recall the huge respect that I gained for health professionals during that time, and my recent involvement with the medical profession has only enhanced that respect.

I am often bemused by the abundance of posters and notices that seem to adorn public hospitals and other health facilities reminding patients of their rights and informing them on how to lodge a complaint. I often think that perhaps we need more posters encouraging and assisting them in writing a letter of appreciation.

Throughout my journey from 24-hour Surgery, General Practitioner, ENT Specialists, Christchurch Public Hospital, Hospital Dental Services to St George's Cancer Care Centre I encountered only impressive dedication and wonderful care and attention.

I was taken aback to be told that I required nine teeth to be extracted prior to commencement of my cancer treatment, but had no option but to go along with the professional advice. The word "extractions" proved to be something of a euphemism and the two hours in the chair was more akin to a demolition exercise than a dental procedure. As the dental

