



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

Volume 31 | June 2025

# newsletter



## An Update from the Chair

**We're incredibly grateful to the Hugo Trust for their generous donation of the new Surface Guided Radiation Therapy system. It's a fantastic addition to the Centre and will help us deliver even more precise and effective treatment for our patients. You can read more about how it's being used later in this newsletter.**

The Cancer Centre continues to be busy, which I suppose can be seen as both a good and a challenging situation. Through the Institute, we're doing our best to support patients and keep investing in the most up-to-date equipment so we can continue to give people the care and hope they deserve.

Keep well and warm,

**Cilla Glasson**

*Chair, Cancer Institute  
Trustees Limited Board of  
Directors*

## Welcome to Dr David Gibbs, Medical Oncologist

**We are pleased to welcome Medical Oncologist Dr David Gibbs back to the team at St George's Cancer Care Centre.**

Dr Gibbs brings a wealth of experience across both public and private cancer care, with a career spanning more than two decades. After completing his medical training at the Christchurch School of Medicine, University of Otago, he went on to specialise in medical oncology. He spent four years working in London between 1999 and 2003, before returning to Christchurch, where he took up a consultant role and has remained dedicated to advancing oncology care ever since.

Working across multiple settings, including private practice between 2008 and 2016, he held clinical leadership roles at Christchurch Hospital, before rejoining our St George's team in April.

While he treats a wide range of cancer types, Dr Gibbs maintains a generalist approach.

"Seeing patients with a range of tumour types gives you a wider view of what's possible," he says. "It helps you think creatively about treatment options and apply emerging research more broadly."

He is particularly interested in the progress being made in immunotherapy and targeted treatments for cancers such as melanoma and lung cancer.

"We're seeing real gains in survival rates, even for patients with advanced disease," he says.



*Medical Oncologist Dr David Gibbs*

"The next step will be to refine these treatments and to better understand who is most likely to benefit."

In his new role at St George's, Dr Gibbs is looking forward to providing care to more patients and working alongside the team known for their commitment to delivering exceptional cancer care.

"It's great to return to a team that is so focused on both innovation and compassion," he says.

Outside of work, Dr Gibbs leads a busy family life. With five growing children, he says he is currently in a phase of "recovery" and enjoying the chance to find a bit more balance.

We are delighted to have Dr Gibbs back at the Centre and look forward to the expertise, thoughtfulness, and care he brings to our patients.

# *New Surface Guided Radiation Therapy improves accuracy, comfort, and outcomes for cancer patients*

**St George's Cancer Care Centre is now equipped with cutting-edge radiation therapy technology, thanks to a generous donation from the Hugo Charitable Trust.**

The purchase of a Surface Guided Radiation Therapy (SGRT) system is set to significantly improve treatment outcomes and the overall experience of those undergoing radiation therapy.

The SGRT system monitors a patient in 'real time', using advanced camera and sensor technology during treatment. It creates a highly detailed surface map of the patient's body, allowing clinicians to ensure precise alignment and reduce the risk of radiation being delivered to surrounding healthy tissue.

"This technology will improve the patient experience and treatment efficiency at our Centre," said Clinical Director and Radiation Oncologist Dr Brendon Anderson.

"Offering a combination of technological precision and patient-



centred care, we're extremely appreciative of the generosity and dedication of the Hugo Charitable Trust to improving cancer treatment for New Zealanders."

Dr Anderson says that patients stand to benefit in multiple ways.

SGRT allows for more efficient treatment sessions by confirming correct positioning more quickly, potentially reducing the overall time spent in treatment. It also reduces or eliminates the need for some uncomfortable immobilisation devices traditionally used during radiation therapy and may replace the need for

permanent positioning tattoos, which some patients find distressing.

The donation is the latest in a long line of contributions by the Hugo Charitable Trust, established in 2017 by Maryanne Green in honour of her late father, Irish-born philanthropist Hugh Green.

The Trust has donated over \$19 million to a wide range of New Zealand organisations, with a strong focus on healthcare, education, and social services.

"This gift is an outstanding example of how philanthropy can directly enhance patient care," said Dr Anderson. "We're proud to offer our patients access to the latest innovations in cancer treatment."

The installation of SGRT at St George's positions the centre at the forefront of radiation therapy technology in New Zealand, reinforcing its commitment to world-class, compassionate cancer care.

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## *Institute expand comprehensive care support for St George's Cancer Care patients*

**The Institute is pleased to announce the extension of their support of St George's Cancer Care Centre patients with a further comprehensive range of supportive care services.**

Such services are crucial for enhancing the overall quality of life for patients, including the Institute-funded patient access to psychosocial care to help mitigate anxiety, depression and other psychological symptoms experienced by patients.

From later this year, patients will also be able to access nutritional advice and physiotherapy.



*From the left: Hayley Blair (dietician), Julia Jack (physio), Tracey King (Medical oncology & Haematology Manager), Kath Parkes (Patient coordinator), Maggie Meeks (counsellor) and Meg Logan (counsellor and oncology massage therapist)*

Medical nutrition therapy is a vital component in the management of patients with cancer, and eating

properly can help maintain body weight, reduce treatment-related side effects, and improve the overall effectiveness of treatment.

Physical activity is equally important with exercise helping to improve physical functioning, reduce fatigue, and enhance quality of life before, during and after treatment. Tailored exercise programs based on the patient's condition, cancer type, and specific treatment stage provide significant benefits.

These services will be delivered by a specialist oncology comprehensive care team through our partnership with Encompass Health.



# ASMIRT/ NZIMRT Conference 2025 – Adelaide

Allison Copland was one of three from our Radiation Therapy team that recently attended the ASMIRT/NZIMRT 2025, the Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy's 19th National Conference held in conjunction with the New Zealand Institute of Medical Radiation Technology (NZIMRT). Allison describes their four busy but rewarding days of learning and sharing with international colleagues at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

The 2025 Conference theme was Divergence & Convergence: Opportunities & Focus and was an excellent opportunity for international networking, knowledge sharing, and professional collaboration.

We explored how 'divergence' allows us to discover and delve into the diverse innovations in our field, such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and particle therapy, while 'convergence' focused on uniting radiation therapy and medical imaging practitioners from Australia, New Zealand, and beyond to enhance collective expertise and patient care.

Alongside discussions with peers from across the globe, we also took advantage of the many opportunities to explore new collaborative projects and initiatives.

A comprehensive industry exhibition showcasing the latest medical radiation science technologies accompanied the Conference, including = concurrent technical sessions, international keynote speakers, a student conference, a vibrant and inclusive social program and a variety of pre-conference workshops and site visits of some of the Southern Hemispheres leading medical research institutions.

Our team took the opportunity to attend the pre-conference workshop



Allison Copland, Radiation Therapy Manager



Allison Copland, Radiation Therapy Manager

Innov-AI-tion: Focus on Practical Applications and Quality of Artificial Intelligence for Radiation Therapists. The half-day workshop covered practical applications of artificial intelligence in radiation therapy which featured local and international AI experts and included real-world case studies demonstrating AI deployment in clinical settings. It also covered AI's impact on the roles of Radio Therapists, education, safe implementation, quality assurance, and governance.

Our Radiation Therapy Manager, Alli, was invited to collaborate with Monash University and other industry experts to present in a session titled 'Adaptive Radiation Therapy and Advanced Practice: Bridging Theory and Clinical Excellence'

She presented our experience implementing an adaptive radiation therapy program into our service here at St Georges Cancer Care Centre which is the first of its kind in New Zealand, utilising our Elekta Unity MR Linac.

As part of the session, Alli also presented a case study of a patient recently treated on the MR Linac where, without this technology, radiation therapy would not have been an option. In this case, the patient had a small node of metastatic cancer which unfortunately abutted the patient's duodenum, a dose-limiting structure which is part of the small intestine and is critical in the digestive system. Delivering a therapeutic dose of radiation therapy while avoiding the dose to the duodenum was not possible without both the soft tissue visualisation and the daily adaptive functionality of the MR Linac.

Our team were able to deliver this dose effectively and improve the patient's outcome and quality of life, which would otherwise have seen his disease managed with ongoing chemotherapy and the related toxicities.

We value the opportunity to extend our knowledge and skill through attendance at these events and the importance of having representation from St Georges Cancer Care Centre to showcase our centre's achievements and technological advancements.

# *Palliative and supportive care at St George's Cancer Care Centre*

**The Cancer Care Centre is pleased to announce the appointment of palliative care physicians Dr Lee Anderson and Dr Di Murphy to the team to provide patients with palliative and further supportive care.**

These further cancer care services for patients with advanced cancer are offered to:

- significantly improve patient's experiences
- enhance patient and whānau understanding of their illness and prognosis
- allow time and opportunity to face complex issues such as treatment decisions and advanced care planning
- support transition where required to end of life care.

As New Zealand's first private palliative and supportive care service, the Centre is proud to be delivering comprehensive and world leading care to patients.



*Dr Di Murphy*



*Dr Lee Anderson*



## St George's Cancer Institute Newsletters

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