# Newsletter Volume 21 – September 2018

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# **Greetings**

On our way to warmer weather I hope, perhaps not as hot as our Northern hemisphere counterparts.

Chris Atkinson gave a very good interview, as Medical Director of Lung Foundation NZ, on TV1 breakfast a few weeks ago. He was talking about the unfunded drug Keytruda, which is set to revolutionise lung cancer treatment.

Lung cancer kills four times more people than road accidents and kills more New Zealander's than breast cancer, melanoma and prostate cancer combined.

The Institute would like to assist with more funding for patients who can't afford it – perhaps a good option for another fundraiser!

The HexaPOD™ six degrees of freedom stereotactic couch purchased by the St George's Institute Equipment Trust and leased to St George's Cancer Care has already treated several patients with spinal tumours.

Here's to a warm spring and lots of great outcomes from St George's Cancer Care.

Cilla Glasson Chair, Cancer Institute Trustees Limited and Fundraising Committee

# Spinal stereotactic programme update

The HexaPOD™couch is now fully commissioned and being used daily to enhance patient treatments (not just those who are to have stereotactic treatments).



Our spine stereotactic programme is progressing well, and we have treated our first case, with another two in the pipeline. The first case was

treated for Christchurch Hospital (CDHB) at no cost thanks to St George's Cancer Institute, St George's Hospital Inc, and St George's Cancer Care.

The introduction of this programme has taken a lot of hard work and commitment from a dedicated team. This involved specialised training in Toronto, Canada for one of our radiation therapists, a physicist and two oncologists.

Spinal stereotactic treatment cases are first presented at a special multidisciplinary meeting that includes surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, and others. Once it has been recommended the patient receive this highly specialised treatment they will undergo a planning procedure involving MRI and CT scans. The team of oncologists, radiation therapists and physicists then spend many hours designing the best possible plan and doing quality assurance checks prior to treatment delivery. All the planning procedures can take a couple of weeks to complete and then there are usually two treatments – one each day for two days.

Thank you again to the St George's Cancer Institute for enabling us to acquire the HexaPOD™couch for the delivery of this specialised treatment programme. This will benefit patients in Canterbury who would not otherwise have this available to them locally.

Viv Ali

# **Integration with Pacific Radiology Group**

Pacific Radiology Christchurch, formerly Christchurch Radiology Group has a close and long standing relationship St George's Cancer Care. Medical imaging is involved in the diagnosis, staging, treatment planning and follow up of many types of cancer.

Following a diagnosis of cancer, accurate assessment of the extent of tumour spread is usually required to stage the cancer to determine appropriate treatment options. Pacific Radiology offers Xray, ultrasound, CT, MRI and PET/CT, providing comprehensive cancer imaging assessment. PET/CT combines anatomical and metabolic information and is the most accurate imaging technique for staging many types of cancer. PET (positron emission tomography) utilises positron emitting isotopes, the most commonly used agent being FDG (fluorodeoxyglucose) where a carbon atom on a glucose molecule is substituted for radioactive fluorine. FDG accumulates in tissues that are metabolizing glucose, glucose being the main source of energy for most cancer cell types. Sodium fluoride can be used to detect cancer spread in bones and PSMA is specific marker for prostate carcinoma.

Pacific Radiology also offers interventional radiology services, including biopsy for defining cancer cell type, venous access for chemotherapy, needle directed thermal ablation of cancers, drainage procedures for fluid collections or blockages of kidneys or bile ducts, and procedures to help with pain management and other complications of cancer.

Radiologists can also help radiation oncologists with radiotherapy planning.

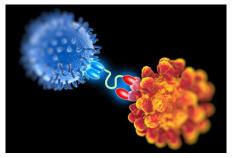
Our close working relationship with Pacific Radiology helps us optimise cancer management for our patients.

Andrew Laing Radiologist, Pacific Radiology Christchurch and Director, St George's Cancer Institute Trustees Ltd

#### Innovative drug treatments

**Fact:** Currently about 20% of patients on drug therapy at St George Cancer Care are having medications like Keytruda (Pembrolizumab), that may not be funded in the public system for their clinical scenario. It is good for patients that they can receive these unfunded treatments at our Centre.

Unfortunately, the cost of many of these drugs can be thousands of dollars per month which makes funding treatment a daunting prospect for



many. Sometimes the drug company will provide the drug free of charge after it is shown to be working for the patient. The side effect of 'financial toxicity' is therefore real for many cancer patients and their whānau.

Chris Atkinson Radiation Oncologist, St George's Cancer Care Director, St George's Cancer Institute Trustees Ltd

#### The awesome administration team

From the lovely welcoming smiles, you get when you enter the Centre, to appointment bookings, typing, accounts work and so much more, our administration team work tirelessly to ensure our patients have the best possible experience when under our care. Their work is varied and relies on them being flexible and able to multitask. The wonderful feedback from our patients reminds us of what a fantastic job they all do.



# **Treatment Support Grants**

The Trust started providing financial assistance to qualifying patients in July 2011 and up to July 2018 has assisted 223 patients with financial support totalling \$706,660.

The Institute continues to be grateful for the generous donations received from a patient who was so impressed with the care she received from Mary Thomson, Lymphoedema Physiotherapist, that she wanted other patients, who could not afford this service, to receive the benefit of the specialised treatment. The Institute also received a donation from another donor, specifically tagged for this treatment.

Since the physiotherapy grant commenced in May 2014, support has been provided to 138 patients to the value of \$41,602 up to June 2018.

# Men's Wellness evening

On Wednesday 6 June 2018 St George's Cancer Institute hosted a Men's Wellness evening in Westport. The event was in no small part successful because of the support provided by Buller District Mayor, Garry Howard.

The evening attracted 100 attendees who came to hear Associate Professor Chris Atkinson (radiation oncologist) and Dr Frank Kueppers (urologist) speak about health

issues affecting middle aged and older men.

Dr Atkinson discussed the various cancers often prevalent in this demographic and the types of treatment available. Dr



Kueppers presented an absorbing discourse on prostate issues often faced by older men and the various treatments used in counteracting them.

Both speakers were well received judging by the number of wide ranging questions from the floor throughout the proceedings.

Chris Weir Director, St George's Cancer Institute Trustees Ltd

# St George's Cancer Institute newsletters

We trust you find the updates on St George's Cancer Care – The Glasson Centre and the fundraising activities of the St George's Cancer Institute interesting.

In an effort to reduce printing costs and improve distribution, you can receive future newsletters via email. We encourage you to add your name to our email distribution list - please advise details:

EMAIL:
NAME:
Thank you for your interest in St George's Cancer Care  - The Glasson Centre and your support of the St George's Cancer Institute.
If you no longer wish to receive future newsletters, please tick (✓) the box and advise your name.
NAME:
Please complete and return in the enclosed self addressed envelope or email
dawn.hinton@stgeorges.org.nz advising you wish to be removed from the database. Thank you.

### **DONATION CARD**

To support the St George's Cancer Institute, please fill out the form, including your cheque or credit card details, an post to: Fundraising Coordinator, St George's Cancer Institute, Private Bag 4737, Christchurch 8140.							
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Address:						_	
Phone:	e-mail <sup>.</sup>						

A receipt quoting the St George's Cancer Institute number CC26864 will be posted to the above address.

Thank you

St George's Cancer Institute, St George's Hospital Inc., Private Bag 4737, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand DIRECTORS: Cilla Glasson (021 662 195), Rob Black (021 505 816), Chris Weir (021 832 988), Dr Andrew Laing (021 905 071); Dr Chris Atkinson (027 522 8447), Dr Chris Wynne (027 244 3963)