Newsletter Volume 24 – March 2021

www.stgeorgescancerinstitute.co.nz

Greetings

Well, we are heading towards the end of summer and I'm not looking forward to winter. I was hoping 2021 would be better, however it has started off worse with the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and the changing alert levels. Let's hope things improve

We have commenced the ground improvement work for the construction of the third bunker. The design has been future proofed to accommodate world leading linear accelerator technology, only made possible through the generous donations we receive.

Thank you to some of our cancer patients who have shared their stories: (www.stgeorgescancercarecentre.org.nz).

Cilla Glasson Chair, Cancer Institute Trustees Ltd



Dr Michelle Vaughan

Consultant Medical Oncologist at St George's Cancer Care since 2017

Specialist areas:

- Lower gastrointestinal cancers
- Gynaecological cancers

Michelle graduated in medicine and completed her specialist training from Auckland University in 1988. She went on to undertake advanced training at The Royal Marsden Hospital in London.

Returning to New Zealand in 1998, Michelle worked at Auckland Hospital from 2001 to 2007, moving to Christchurch in 2007.

Michelle is a member of various medical organisations including the International Gynaecological Cancer Society and New Zealand Gynaecological Cancer Group. She is the Deputy Chair on the Research Advisory Committee for the Australia New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group.

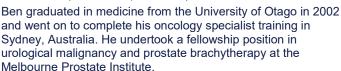
"I love my job and aim to achieve the best possible outcome for every patient, through a personalised and collaborative approach."

Dr Ben Hindson

Consultant Radiation Oncologist at St George's Cancer Care since 2014

Specialist areas:

- Urological cancer
- Prostate cancer
- Bladder cancer
- Gastrointestinal cancers
- Palliative radiation therapy
- Prostate brachytherapy
- Central Nervous System tumours (brain and spinal cord)



Ben is a member of various medical organisations including the Trans-Tasman Radiation Oncology Group and the Australian and New Zealand Urogenital and Prostate Cancer Trials Group (ANZUP).

"I really enjoy working with the great team at St George's and being able to provide timely care and high-quality treatment for our patients."



Lung Cancer Research

A unique research collaboration for patients with lung cancer is underway in Christchurch.

Dr Raj Kumar, medical oncologist (*pictured right*), is participating in a global clinical trial using two novel immunotherapy medicines.

Immunotherapy is able to unlock the body's immune system to help fight cancer cells.

Patients have been referred from

Christchurch, Timaru, Queenstown and the West Coast.

After assessment at St George's Cancer Care the patients receive their experimental treatment at Christchurch Clinical Studies Trust

Dr Chris Wynne, medical director, says it's exciting to be able to provide lung cancer patients access to immunotherapy drugs that are not yet approved or funded.

Specialists throughout the South Island, including Christchurch Hospital, are referring patients and Christchurch is the leading centre globally for the number of patients in this clinical trial.

Dr Kumar says, "We expect to see the disease responding in this group of patients where treatment options have previously been limited."

What do we do at St George's Cancer Care?

Some of the things that we help people with include:

- Giving information about how to talk about cancer with children and family
- · Getting better sleep
- Managing fatigue
- Strategies to help reduce stress and anxiety or low mood and depression
- Ideas to slow down busy, racing thoughts
- Managing pain and discomfort
- Adjusting to changes in your body
- Relationships with partners, family and friends
- Sexual functioning
- Managing work expectations
- Treatment related challenges and planning for the future
- Treatment related phobias eg claustrophobia, fear of needles
- Talking over difficult decisions
- Communicating with your health care team
- Finding meaning and purpose

Overview of our support services

Before, during and after chemotherapy / immunotherapy and radiation treatments it is important for patients to have access to other supportive services.

Dietitian services

Nutrition plays an important role in the management of cancer, and our dietitian is available to discuss specific needs with our patients.

Eating well can positively influence and support cancer treatment. Food and nutrition are important parts of any successful cancer treatment. Nutrients support the growth of healthy cells in your body and help maintain your energy and strength levels.

Nutrition priorities during cancer treatment are:

• To prevent weight loss, even for those overweight



- To maintain muscle mass
- To prevent unintentional weight gain, particularly for hormonal cancers such as prostate or breast cancer

People with cancer may find their appetite and food preferences are affected by their treatment making it difficult to meet nutritional needs. Our dietitian can help by individualising a nutrition plan for our patients based on the type of treatment they require, and will also consider their food preferences, symptoms, lifestyle, beliefs and concerns. Once cancer treatment is complete, keeping a healthy diet will help the body heal and offer protective effects for the future. Following a healthy eating plan can help reduce your risk of other chronic diseases.

Physiotherapy services and wellness classes

Our specialised physiotherapists will help restore or improve movement and function. This includes lymphoedema management, pilates, exercise and rehabilitation services.

Patients can benefit from a range of wellness classes offered, from weekly yoga sessions to fitness classes in addition to the individual consultations.

Exercise classes: Group based exercise classes have been shown to improve cancer patients' physical and psychological functioning both during and after treatment. It does this through helping to maintain body weight, body composition, improve fitness, strength, quality of life, and lower levels of fatigue, pain and depressive symptoms.

Yoga classes: Yoga is a mind body practice that involves breathing, stretching, balance and strengthening exercises. It can help with stress and can enhance a sense of wellbeing. Some people find that it can help them manage the side effects of their cancer treatment.

Psychological support

Our psychologists are here to help manage the emotional challenges of our patient's cancer journey, as well as other areas of life such as family and work.

What are clinical psychologists?

Clinical psychologists have trained for at least 7 years and are registered health professionals. They use their knowledge of psychological theories to help patients and their families develop strategies to reduce distress and increase helpful thoughts and behaviours.

Speech language therapy

Depending on the cancer and /or treatments some patients may notice changes to their voice, speech and ability to swallow. Our speech language therapist will work with patients to minimise these changes.

What is a speech language therapist?

A speech language specialist helps manage communication (speech, voice, language) and swallowing disorders.

During chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy patients may experience the following difficulties:

- Difficulty swallowing due to the location and size of the cancer
- Inflammation/pain in the mouth or throat caused by treatment
- Pain when swallowing (odyndophagia)
- Dry mouth and thick saliva due to changes in your saliva production
- Reduced mouth opening (trismus) Loss of taste and smell changes
- Voice changes

If someone has had surgery to structures of their mouth, they may also have changes in your speech.

When might someone see our speech language therapist? (SLT)

If the oncologist suspects someone will have speech, voice or swallowing changes due to their treatment, they will often see the SLT prior to chemotherapy/radiation therapy commencing. The SLT will ask what the patient can eat/drink now, provide information about what to expect with regards to speech, swallow and voice, and provide preventative exercises to reduce the effects of the chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy on the muscles/structures of swallowing and vocal production. The speech language therapist is available throughout treatment to support the patient and carers/family and provide suggestions on how to eat and drink safely to maintain fluid and nutritional needs, and to provide therapy. Patients continue to be monitored after the completion of treatment as well.

St George's Cancer Institute newsletters

Thank you for your interest in St George's Cancer Care – The Glasson Centre and your support of the St George's Cancer Institute.

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