



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

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# newsletter

## Unbelievable how we are nearly at Christmas

St George's Cancer Institute was pleased to fund the new MR Linear Accelerator (MR Linac), which is the first in New Zealand and the 100th in the world. The machine has been treating patients since May 2023. The new Versa HD linear accelerator has also been commissioned and is now in use treating patients. This machine replaces one of our 12-year-old linear accelerators which was reaching the end of its service life. These two new machines will make a big difference to the cancer treatments available at the Centre and in New Zealand generally.

Prostate cancers have been treated successfully on the MR Linear Accelerator. By the end of the year patients with other soft tissue cancers, including some which were previously unsuitable for radiation, like liver and pancreas cancers, will also be treated.

We hosted an information evening in Wanaka earlier this month with three Oncologists from the Centre to provide updates about cancer treatments and the future. If anyone feels that they can get a group together to hear more about the Centre, please let us know.

Here's to a long, warm, healthy summer without too many more unwanted events.

Thank you for all your support.

### **Cilla Glasson**

*Chair, Cancer Institute Trustees  
Limited Board of Directors*



*St George's Cancer Care Centre's MR Linear Accelerator*

## *Nine to Noon discuss MR linear accelerator with Cilla Glasson*

**The Cancer Institute's Board Chair Cilla Glasson did an amazing job promoting St George's Cancer Care Centre's new MR Linac on Radio New Zealand in July.**

Cilla spoke with Kathryn Ryan on Nine to Noon about the significance of the

MR Linac to cancer patients across New Zealand.

If you'd like to listen to the interview with Cilla, head to RNZ's website and use the link to find the episode: <https://bit.ly/40xh97Z>.



*St George's Cancer Care Centre has had an exciting year for its physics and radiation therapist teams*

## *Cancer Care Centre update – Jerome Gastaldo, Chief Physicist*

### **This year St George's Cancer Care Centre engaged in a major overhaul of its core radiation therapy equipment.**

We were prepared for 2023 to be an exciting and challenging year for the physics and radiation therapist teams and so far, the year has fulfilled its promise. Before releasing any equipment for clinical use, the physics team undertakes commissioning which consists of numerous tests and data gathering to guarantee safe and accurate use.

On the research and development side, we are collaborating with

several manufacturers to develop new solutions and improve existing products. This includes Artificial Intelligence-based auto contouring software and dose calculation software dedicated to the MR Linac. Our input has received global recognition from these vendors, in particular Radformation, as we are the first centre in the world to implement the use of Clearcalc within MR Linac workflow.

We also found time to facilitate our commitment to education.

I attended the MR Linac Consortium in Amsterdam in June and presented a paper on the implementation of Proknow for the MR Linac workflow. We are the first in the world to use this software in such a way.

The Centre's physics team was part of the organising committee of the Engineering and Physical Sciences in Medicine (EPSM) conference which was hosted in Christchurch in early November. We are also very proud to be the co-host of the Austral-Asian Summer School for Medical Physicists.

# A first for New Zealand cancer patients – rehabilitation support through new joint venture

**Two organisations have put their skills together to provide rehabilitation health services to cancer patients and their whānau supporting them to live well, pre, post and during their cancer treatment.**

In a first of its kind, the Cancer Society Canterbury West Coast Trust and St George's Cancer Care Centre, have formed a joint venture called Encompass Health. It opened in September and now provides allied health and psychosocial cancer care services, ensuring patient's needs are met.

Research recently published by the University of Otago found that many cancer survivors face a range of issues after treatment, but support for them is limited.

The study found that despite advances in cancer care, there are

still unmet patient needs after completing active treatment and very few services that specifically support people from a psychosocial and rehabilitation perspective.

Encompass Health will have services tailored specifically for cancer patients, including:

- Psychosocial support including counselling and psychology
- Physiotherapy
- Exercise physiology
- Lymphoedema therapy
- Group fitness and peer support

## Cancer care services expand to Dunedin and Queenstown

Those seeking cancer treatment through St George's Cancer Care Centre, based in Christchurch, will now have access to a radiation oncologist in Dunedin and a medical oncologist in Queenstown.

Dr Tivanka Senanayake is working in Dunedin, and Dr Jim Edwards in Queenstown, to offer those in the region who've been diagnosed with cancer the chance to see one of the private hospital's oncologists closer to home.

Dr Senanayake says, "The Cancer Care Centre receives referrals from across the South Island which can mean a lot of travel for some patients to Christchurch. By having me based in Dunedin, we can now offer patients in the area access to pre and post treatment appointments, however, they will still need to travel to Christchurch to receive radiation."



*Dr Tivanka Senanayake*



*Dr Jim Edwards*

## Exercise Physiologist welcomes Encompass Health

**Encompass Health Exercise Physiologist Jess Allan works with cancer patients to regain movement, which she says not only helps with their confidence, but is a positive step for their mental health.**

"We need more services to support people through this challenging time, and I've worked with people who felt quite lost after treatment and didn't know where to turn for further support," Jess says.

"Having these services under one roof will allow us to support people and their families during recovery. My job is to help someone feel confident and empowered in their body again through movement, and the more services on offer to help, the better," says Jess.



*Exercise physiologist Jess Allan*

St George's Cancer Care Centre will hold monthly clinics in Queenstown and Wanaka with Medical Oncologist Dr Jim Edwards, all part of the Centre's vision to improve pre and post cancer treatment access to patients across the South Island.

"We are providing world-class care closer to home. It's all about bringing this top-line care to the patient, and that means to regional areas outside of Christchurch," Dr Edwards says.

