



BREAST CANCER RESEARCH TRUST

# BrEaST *Bulletin*

January/February 2024

Did you know, every day, more than ONE Waikato woman will be diagnosed with breast cancer and every day, TEN New Zealand women will be diagnosed with breast cancer?

Most breast cancers, especially those diagnosed in the early stages have a low risk of recurrence. There are millions of women around the world (more than 25,000 in New Zealand) who have survived breast cancer and gone on to lead full lives. The most important factor in surviving breast cancer is early detection and treatment.

Research is the best weapon we have to fight breast cancer. By providing wāhine/women with access to clinical trials, we can advance our knowledge of breast cancer, discover best-practice treatments, and get those diagnosed the outcomes they so desperately hope for.

Let's come together with **ONE HEART**, one mind and one purpose this February and unite to gain knowledge and save lives.

[Click here to visit our website and unite your heart with our vision to gain knowledge and save lives.](#)



Your donation is a gift of hope and love to the people we serve. You are the heart of our cause and we are humbled by your support. Thank you!

**BrEaST** wishes,

**Cindy Jacobs**

**Manager: Marketing/Fundraising & Events**

**Love yourself! Remember to check your breasts once a month, early detection saves lives**

# BrEaST CHECK



**CHANGE IN SIZE or SHAPE  
or SWELLING**



**BREAST or NIPPLE PAIN**



**DIMPLING SKIN or  
INVERTED NIPPLE**



**LUMP, THICKENING or  
SWELLING**



**NIPPLE DISCHARGE**



**RASH AROUND NIPPLE**

A breast self-examination uses a combination of physical and visual examinations of your breasts to check for signs and symptoms that could be breast cancer.

It is important to become familiar with the way your breasts normally look and feel, as this will help you identify any changes or abnormalities in your breasts, including lumps, skin reddening, dimpling or puckering, or nipple discharge.

How to perform a breast self-examination:

1. Stand in front of a mirror, with your arms at your sides, visually inspect your breasts, looking for any changes in breast or nipple shape;
2. Lift one arm over your head and with the other move the pads of your three middle fingers around your breast, covering the entire breast and armpit area;
3. Using a medium pressure, feel for any lumps, thickening, or any other breast changes as well as check for any unusual nipple discharge. A breast lump can feel like a distinct mass that appears more solid than the rest of your breast tissue;
4. Repeat these steps for the other breast.

If you find anything unusual, don't panic, nine out of ten symptoms are not due to cancer, but it's important so see a doctor to be sure. Proper assessment and referral for appropriate further work-up is needed to determine whether breast changes are benign/innocent or breast cancer.

If you are 45 – 69 years, remember to book your free screening mammogram on 0800 270 200. If you aren't eligible for a free screening mammogram, (do discuss with) talk to your GP about having a mammogram for your personal situation.

**Research results tell us more about the decision-making process for mastectomy and breast reconstruction**



Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in New Zealand women. Those diagnosed face a number of decisions to make about breast cancer surgery, including whether to have a lumpectomy, mastectomy, or breast reconstruction.

Breast reconstruction adds an extra layer of complexity to breast cancer surgery, as there are a number of different reconstruction options with differing recovery times, and not all options are appropriate for all women. The time frame for surgical decision making is often short and made following diagnosis when emotional stress is high.

**University of Waikato and Te Whatu Ora Health NZ Waikato researchers investigated the decision-making process for women considering mastectomy alone or mastectomy with breast reconstruction.**

This research was led by Dr Tania Blackmore (Te Kura Whatu Oho Mauri - School of Psychology, University of Waikato). Twenty –four women who had undergone breast cancer surgery were interviewed to assess the main factors leading to their decision to go with their chosen surgical procedure.

Interviews showed that decision-making was complex and draws on many factors, including medical contraindications and personal preference. Women were confronted with making a personal assessment of their femininity versus survival. Women were fearful of what surgery would involve and how their reconstructed breast or mastectomy scar might look like.

**This research highlighted that shared decision-making between women and their surgeon is vitally important to inform women of their options. Shared decision-making can lessen fear, provide support and give women a sense of autonomy over their treatment decisions. Providing visual information depicting surgical outcomes for both breast reconstruction and non-reconstruction is also recommended to support women's surgical expectations.**

Professor Ian Campbell (Breast Surgeon and BCRT Chair) and Jenni Scarlet (BCRT Research Nurse) supported this research.

Dr Blackmore and colleagues now plan to lead a study developing a "decision aid" with pictures to help women make more informed decisions.

**Reference:**

**Key factors in the decision making process for mastectomy alone or breast reconstruction: A qualitative analysis.**

T Blackmore, K Norman, V Burrett, J Scarlet, I Campbell, R Lawrenson. The Breast. 16 November, 2023

# Fundraise for breast cancer

Every day, more than one Waikato woman  
will be diagnosed with breast cancer.

Every day, ten NZ women  
will be diagnosed with breast cancer.

The Breast Cancer Research Trust team works to gain  
knowledge to save lives, improve outcomes and the  
quality of life for those diagnosed with breast cancer. We  
understand that breast cancer forever changes the lives  
of the person diagnosed and those around them.

Host a pink-themed fundraiser to support the Breast  
Cancer Research Trust. Popular days are:

- During the month of May in celebration of Mother's  
Day (12th) or International Clinical Trials Day (20th)
- October which is breast cancer awareness month
- or anytime is a good time to raise awareness!

Your support enables the Trust to remain at the forefront  
of international breast cancer research.

Contact us to let us know your plans,  
or if you have any questions.

**022 131 1303 | [ADMIN@BREASTCANCERRESEARCH.ORG.NZ](mailto:ADMIN@BREASTCANCERRESEARCH.ORG.NZ)**

**[WWW.BREASTCANCERRESEARCH.ORG.NZ](http://WWW.BREASTCANCERRESEARCH.ORG.NZ)**

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*Please act now!*

DONATE BY MARCH 31ST AND YOU CAN  
CLAIM A 33.3% TAX DEDUCTION ON YOUR  
DONATION FOR THIS FINANCIAL YEAR.



**Breast Cancer  
Research Trust**

*Gaining Knowledge. Saving Lives.*

**M** 022 131 1303

**E** [Cindy.Jacobs@breastcancerresearch.org.nz](mailto:Cindy.Jacobs@breastcancerresearch.org.nz)

**W** [www.breastcancerresearch.org.nz](http://www.breastcancerresearch.org.nz)