

Cancer Connect

The St George's newsletter for people affected by cancer

Issue 6, January – June 2020



A new state-of-the-art training room at St George's, University of London is helping to train the next generation of Therapeutic Radiographers.

Students are taught onsite at St George's for half their course, with the rest spent on clinical placements. To help transition into the clinical environment, they get to experience a 3D simulation of a radiotherapy treatment room, including the patient on the treatment couch, in a virtual environment facility known as VERT (Virtual Environment for Radiotherapy Training).

VERT displays all of the organs in the body so students can see where the radiation beams travel, while a colour wash on the image shows exactly where the radiation dose is deposited. Real-time movements of the treatment machine give students an understanding of why precision is important in setting up patients for treatment. The hand-held pendant and the virtual monitors are exactly as they are in real life, and the virtual machine is operated in the same way. This allows students to start developing their psychomotor skills before placement. Room lasers help students learn how patients are set up on the treatment couch. Students engage in role play sessions, and get to call patients for treatment, record patient ID, and give pre- and post- treatment advice to encourage their communication skills.

The Department of Radiography plans to work closely with hospital colleagues to develop a programme of demonstrations for patients that are referred for radiotherapy. These demonstrations will help patients to familiarise themselves with the radiotherapy process, reducing anxiety about their treatment. Staff are also welcome to visit for a demonstration.

If you would like to see a demonstration of VERT, please contact Lauren Fantham via l.fantham@sgul.kingston.ac.uk

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Debbi Ashley, Medical Secretary at St George's, recently celebrated her ten year 'cancerversary' by taking part in the annual Breast Cancer Now fashion show.

Debbi, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009, shared the stage with 31 other people, who have also been diagnosed and were selected out of hundreds of applicants.

The event kick-started Breast Cancer Awareness Month last year, with all of the models transformed from head-to-toe, wearing a range of beautiful outfits professionally styled by fashion director and stylist Hilary Alexander OBE.

Debbi said:

"In June 2009 my world was rocked by a breast cancer diagnosis."

"I then had a mastectomy followed by six rounds of chemotherapy and then five weeks of radiotherapy - the effects of this still affect me today. My last radiotherapy session was the day before Christmas Eve 2009 and I got the all clear in January 2010.

"I was so excited to take part in the show - I really had the best time ever from start (8am) to finish (partying till 4am) - I didn't even mind the sequin rash!

"Walking off stage at the end of the event in my own gown, after having been presented with flowers, and straight into the arms of my superhero children was very emotional."

Find out more about the work of Breast Cancer Now by visiting: www.breastcancernow.org

Debbi takes to the catwalk to mark her 'cancerversary'

"The team at Breast Cancer Now worked tirelessly throughout the time to make us feel so special."

Debbi Ashley, Cancerversary

Voice Making a difference for people diagnosed with cancer



It's more important than ever to be able to offer patients and their families access to the finest care possible.

In April 2019 St George's announced its commitment to prioritise and channel investment into the development of Cancer Services. Voice, our cancer patient and carer user group, welcomed this news and is keen to see a new dedicated state-of-the-art cancer centre at St George's.

Voice has established a sub group chaired by Veronique Furse to help raise funds for this project. If you are planning on fundraising this year, or leaving a gift in a will please consider making Cancer Services at St George's your charity of choice, and invest in support that any of us, our friends, or family may one day benefit from.

Anyone with ideas or an interest in fundraising, please contact Veronique on patient.voice@stgeorges.nhs.uk.

Welfare and benefits service



Rodrigo Fenick, Macmillan Welfare and Benefits Case Worker

Did you know that cancer is classed as a disability under workplace equalities legislation? Or that health and social care professionals can help cancer patients access the Macmillan grant quicker and more efficiently using the Macmillan online application form?

In addition, cancer patients on a low income can apply directly for a Macmillan grant by completing an application via the Macmillan Cancer Support Helpline on Tel: 0800 808 808.

Furthermore, the helpline provides a Work Support Service to cancer patients nationally. For face-to-face appointments the Macmillan Information and Support Centre at St George's offers booked appointments to help you explore your rights at work.

We're also pleased to confirm the Macmillan Citizens Advice Service for South West London now provides an additional full day of free and confidential welfare and money advice and support for St George's cancer patients. To book an appointment call 020 7042 0332 or complete the referral form at www.cawandsworth.org/macmillan.

For other advice services, see overleaf.

Get the most out of health and wellbeing events

We know that cancer doesn't just affect a person's physical health. It can have a far-reaching impact on mental health, finances, relationships and social care needs.

That's why at St George's, people living with cancer, their families, friends and carers are given opportunities to access educational talks, resources, and to chat with a wide range of professionals and organisations offering holistic support.

Our events focus on specific cancer types, or on wide ranging topics for all cancer types such as Coping with Fatigue, Peripheral Neuropathy, 'Skin Fitness' workshops for men, and health and wellbeing days.

After meeting with local support services at one of our market stall-type events, one family member said she had "no idea of the help available."

Rather than remain isolated, a patient wrote to us stating: "It was good to learn that my emotions and feelings post treatment are 'normal' and shared by others."

Attendees also reported becoming more knowledgeable about the consequences of treatment and signs and symptoms of cancer recurrence, as well as feeling more in control of their situation. Similarly, evaluation shows patients that attend events gain a sense of reassurance and improved emotional wellbeing.

For activities and events, see www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/macmillan.



Improving patient wellbeing

Things you may not know about cancer



Surprising animal cancer facts

The great majority of cancer cases in animals occur when a seemingly normal cell spirals out of control. However, some creatures can get cancer from polluted oceans (for instance, beluga whales in Canada's Saint Lawrence Estuary), whilst others such as the Tasmanian Devil, clams, and cockles have very unusual types of cancers that are transmissible. Curiously, a few species like naked mole rats, elephants, and bowhead whales rarely develop cancer and may hold clues to a defence against cancer.

Oldest description of cancer

The earliest written records of cancer can be found in the Edwin Smith Papyrus manuscript. It is believed to be a copy of an ancient Egyptian textbook on surgery and dates back to about 3000 BC.

There are more than 200 different types of cancer

Although there are more than 200 types of cancer, breast, prostate, lung, and bowel cancers together account for more than half (53%) of all new cases in the UK (2016).

Look to the stars

Sometimes, people we've idolised and seem untouchable get cancer just like everyone else. Irrfan Khan, Robert De Niro, Khloe Kardashian, Audrey Hepburn, Walt Disney, Frank Sinatra, Bob Marley, Ben Stiller, Ralph Lauren, and Steve Jobs - to name a few - have all helped to spread awareness about cancer.

Lifestyle changes

More than 4 in 10 cancer cases could be prevented by lifestyle changes. Not smoking, maintaining a healthy body weight, cutting back on alcohol, a healthy diet, exercise, and enjoying the sun safely can help stack the odds against cancer.

RESOURCES

Macmillan Cancer Information & Support Centre

Ground Floor, Grosvenor Wing,
St George's Hospital

Tel: 020 8725 2677

Open: Mon - Thurs 8.30am -
5.30pm, Fri 9.30am - 4.30pm

[www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/
macmillan](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/macmillan)

Macmillan Cancer Support

Help Line: 0808 808 00 00

Mon - Sun, 8am - 8pm

www.macmillan.org.uk

Other advice services:

Citizens Advice

Tel: 03444 111 444

www.adviceguide.org.uk

to find your local office

Turn2us (financial support)

www.turn2us.org.uk

Benefits calculators

www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators

Age UK

Tel: 0800 055 6112

www.ageuk.org.uk

Law Centres Network

(free legal advice)

Tel: 020 3637 1330

www.lawcentres.org.uk

ACAS (Advice on workplace rights)

Helpline: 0300 123 1100

www.acas.org.uk

National Debtline

Tel: 0808 156 3800

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Step Change (debt advice)

Tel: 0800 138 1111

www.stepchange.org



Ejiro Ejoh

The Cancer Connect editorial team would love to hear your comments about our newsletter

If you would like to make a comment, want more information about any article or have a suggestion for a future article, please email Ejiro Ejoh, Macmillan Cancer Information & Support Centre Manager at patient.voice@stgeorges.nhs.uk or contact the Macmillan Information and Support Centre on **020 8725 2677**.

You can also visit the centre on the ground floor of Grosvenor Wing, St George's Hospital.

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St George's University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust



Voice
the voice of
people at
St George's
affected by
cancer

In partnership with

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT