

# focus on



Cancer  
**Focus**  
NORTHERN IRELAND

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## CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD



Hello – it's great to be gearing up for another busy year at Cancer Focus NI. We have lots of events planned over the coming months and we hope that you can join in and support us along the way.

No Smoking Day takes place on Wednesday 9th March and the theme this year is 'Proud to be a Quitter'. With support from us, smokers can significantly increase their chance of stopping. You can also get advice at your local MediCare Pharmacy or support from your GP, nurse, pharmacist or any health professional which will quadruple your chances of quitting. Go on... you can be 'Proud to be a Quitter'.

Once again we will be holding our annual Men and Cancer Conference in June to update health professionals and others with an interest in men's health and cancer issues. The conference aims to empower men to improve their health, make healthier choices and access the appropriate support services. Look out for more information on our website [www.cancerfocusni.org](http://www.cancerfocusni.org) closer to the event.

Well done to the team at Cancer Focus NI who have won a number of awards including best practice in our wide-ranging work in cancer from the Royal Society for Public Health; being shortlisted for the University of Ulster Placement Employer of the Year 2015; and we also scooped a silver Chartered Institute of Public Relations PRide Award for our Equal Access to Cancer Drugs Campaign NI. For the latest information on this campaign visit [www.cancerfocusni.org](http://www.cancerfocusni.org).

We've launched a new range of post primary school programmes and a new website [www.cancerfocusni.org](http://www.cancerfocusni.org), which has lots more information on the work that we do. Also check out our Facebook and Twitter pages for up-to-date information on our work and events.

Thanks again to all of our volunteers and fundraisers who support our work.

Wishing you all the very best,

Roisin Foster  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



## Help us with research



The University of Ulster is currently running an exploratory study for a research project called The Musculoskeletal Consequences of Breast Reconstruction using the Latissimus Dorsi (LD) Muscle.

This research, funded by Cancer Focus NI, is entering its final phase, exploring not only the woman's experience of LD breast reconstruction but also considering the wider impact this surgery may have on functional activities of daily life. The aim of this study is to gain a holistic understanding of the impact of LD breast reconstruction and to improve care for women living with and beyond breast cancer.

If you have had a breast reconstruction using the muscle in your back and you would like to take part in this study, for more information call Researcher Nicole Blackburn on **028 9036 8735** or email **Blackburn-N@email.ulster.ac.uk**

## Research fills critical gap

A QUALYCARE research study through the NI Cancer Registry at QUB and funded by Cancer Focus NI examined the quality of care provided to people with a cancer diagnosis in their last stages of life. It suggests that dying at home is better than hospital for peace and grieving and it shows what measures need to be in place for advanced cancer patients to die at home, if they wish.

This research is intended to help improve the care provided by local services. It fills a critical gap highlighting a range of measures for cancer patients who wish to die at home including the support of GP home visits, relatives to be given time off work and policy makers to implement comprehensive home care packages and develop measures to support family involvement in care.

The results of this research are published in BMC Medicine journal and you can see the full report at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s12916-015-0466-5>



# Mother and daughter look to a brighter future

Mother and daughter Margaret Copeland, from Newtownhamilton, and Sharon Adams, from Dungannon, both made the brave decision to have double mastectomies when they discovered they had the BRCA 2 mutant gene, which greatly increases the risk of breast cancer.

Margaret and Sharon are appealing to local people to help raise vital funds for more research into the disease. They hope that new scientific developments will mean a brighter future for Sharon's daughter, three-year-old Sophie. The money raised will go toward potentially life-saving research into BRCA at Queen's University Belfast, which Cancer Focus NI is funding.

Margaret, who is married to Jim, was first diagnosed in 2000 at the age of 54. Then, in 2012, Sharon discovered she had breast cancer when she was only 30 and had a new baby to care for. Margaret said: "Tests revealed Sharon was a BRCA2 carrier. She had chemotherapy before having a double mastectomy. By then I'd gone back to the doctor to have a cyst on my neck checked and a mammogram was routinely carried out. It was a huge shock to be told I had developed a completely different type of cancer in my other breast.

"To identify where the BRCA gene had come from both Jim and I agreed to be tested and it was discovered that I was also a carrier. I decided to have a double mastectomy too as I now knew there was a significant risk of a reoccurrence."

Sharon said: "There is a 50% chance that my daughter Sophie could be a carrier but she will have to decide when she is 18 if she wants to be tested. Progress has been made in understanding BRCA over the years and I'd encourage everyone to raise funds to help Cancer Focus NI fund more research at QUB - so any new developments could directly benefit Sophie and generations to come." Margaret and Sharon are members of



Cancer Focus NI's Armagh breast cancer support group which they've found to be a tremendous help.

Margaret said: "I've met lovely women and have made good friends. There are times you feel that no one else understands and cancer can be a very lonely experience. It's comforting to be with others who know exactly what you've been through and to be reassured that life goes on."

Sharon added: "When I had finished all my treatments and the back-up of the hospital was gone I felt I needed an extra bit of support.

"I think at the start the other women thought I was just there to support Mum, as it's not as common to have a breast cancer diagnosis under 40. I am

one of the youngest at the meetings but that does not put me off, in fact I would encourage other younger ladies to attend. It's truly inspiring to meet ladies who are doing so well 20 or 30 years after their treatment - it gives you great hope and optimism for the future."

Anyone who has any concerns about cancer or for more information on our support groups which run throughout Northern Ireland call the Cancer Focus NI free helpline on **0800 783 3339** and speak to a specialist nurse.

# No Smoking Day

Gerry McElwee, Head of Cancer Prevention, Cancer Focus NI, with Colm Kerr, MediCare Pharmacist, encourages smokers to break the habit for good on No Smoking Day, 9th March 2016, and be 'Proud to be a Quitter'.



Stopping smoking is the most important thing that you can do to improve your health but it can take commitment and planning.

Call into your local MediCare Pharmacy for advice, support and information on the Stop Smoking Service available.

You can visit [www.cancerfocusni.org](http://www.cancerfocusni.org) for more information or visit [www.want2stop.info](http://www.want2stop.info) to order a Quit Kit free of charge.

## Award win!

We are the first local charity to receive recognition for our excellent achievements at the prestigious Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) annual awards.

We received our award for best practice in our wide-ranging work in cancer prevention and care services. Our Well Aware service, which brings health checks to older people in the community and raises awareness of the signs and symptoms of the disease, was mentioned in particular.



The Well Aware team has visited thousands of residents at sheltered accommodation and community venues all over Northern Ireland. Dervilia Kernaghan, Cancer Focus NI Well Aware Project Coordinator, said: "As we grow older our risk of cancer increases with around 75% of diagnoses in the over 60s. Our aim is to empower older people to take control of their own health and to feel confident enough to speak to a doctor if they have any concerns. Our key messages to everyone, regardless of age, are: don't smoke, eat a healthy diet, limit alcohol, exercise regularly, take care in the sun and use cancer screening services."

Well Aware is a partnership between Cancer Focus NI and Choice Housing and is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

For more information or to arrange a Well Aware visit, email [wellaware@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:wellaware@cancerfocusni.org) or call 028 9068 0743.

## Helping schools lower cancer risk



We have launched a new range of post primary school programmes and services which support staff and students to help reduce their cancer risk and recognise early signs and symptoms of the disease. We offer a wide range of programmes addressing: media manipulation and how tobacco companies recruit young people as new smokers; one-to-one motivational and peer support to help stop smoking with free Nicotine Replacement Therapy; as well as highlighting the importance of getting to know your body. We identify signs and symptoms to be aware of and look at diet and weight, physical activity, alcohol, smoking, taking care in the sun and use of sunbeds.

We also help pupils learn to respond appropriately to friends whose family has been affected by a cancer diagnosis. All of our student programmes are free of charge and have been developed alongside practicing teachers addressing curricular guidelines. Staff can avail of our stop smoking support programme which includes Nicotine Replacement Therapy, confidential health checks and interactive cancer awareness presentations.

For more information or to book visit [www.cancerfocusni.org](http://www.cancerfocusni.org) call 028 9066 3281 or email [schools@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:schools@cancerfocusni.org)



# Belfast mum warns of rare thyroid cancer



Young Belfast mum Kylee Murphy (29) got the shock of her life when she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Kylee first realised something was wrong when she discovered a lump in her neck in February 2015 but at first she thought it was the start of a cold. Luckily she mentioned it in passing to her GP while on a routine visit.

Not only had Kylee never heard of thyroid cancer before, but she was surprised to learn that it mainly affects young women under the age of 45.

She underwent a 10 hour surgery at the end of June 2015, followed by radio-active iodine treatment in August. She's currently waiting for a scan in January 2016 to see if treatment has been a success.

In the meantime, she has tried to make other people more aware of the disease by sharing her story. Kylee strongly urges other young women to be aware of thyroid cancer. She said: "If you found a lump in your breast you wouldn't hesitate to get it checked out, but most people finding a small lump on their neck would, like I did, assume it was nothing. If my experience persuades just one person to go to the doctor immediately if they find a lump in their neck, then that will make it worthwhile for me."

If you notice a lump or pain in your neck, unexplained hoarseness or changes to your voice or difficulty breathing and swallowing you should see your doctor as soon as possible. However, most thyroid swellings are non-cancerous.

If you have any concerns about cancer call our free helpline on **0800 783 3339** and speak to a specialist nurse.

For more detailed information search for thyroid cancer at [www.becancerawareni/info](http://www.becancerawareni/info) and [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Sing for Life

The Belfast-based Sing for Life community choir, a partnership between Cancer Focus NI and The Crescent Arts Centre for anyone affected by cancer, has made a number of exciting appearances including performing at Culture Night, Belfast, and for the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee at Parliament Buildings, Stormont. Our annual Christmas Concert takes place on Monday 21st December at 8pm in Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast.



The choir is appealing for more men to join to boost the male voice section. If you'd like to join or for more information about the Sing for Life choir contact us on [care@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:care@cancerfocusni.org). For future appearances check out Sing for Life on Facebook.

## Belfast Marathon



Family and friends of Nicola McKenna ran the Belfast Marathon in May 2015 raising over £13,000 for the Nicola McKenna Forget Me Not Fund. They have since raised even more funds through a number of events totalling £21,672 – well done!

If you would like to raise funds for us by taking part in the Belfast Marathon contact Emma on **028 9068 0771** or email [events@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:events@cancerfocusni.org)

## New charity shop

We have opened our 12th charity shop on the Ormeau Road, Belfast. Our address is Unit 11 Ormeau Bakery, so if you are looking to pick up a bargain or to donate goods, please call in.



Pamela Ballantine checks out some bargains at our charity shop.

In addition to the usual clothes, books, homeware etc. we are selling small items of furniture. Don't forget us if you or any of your family or friends are doing a clear out!

## Health checks van 'Vital'



Stormont health committee chair Maeve McLaughlin (Foyle MLA) took a tour of our Keeping Well van, which brings health checks and advice to the heart of communities. She also spoke to our counsellor and to staff who look after our bra and swimwear fitting service for women who've had breast surgery, all based at Altnagelvin.

Ms McLaughlin said, "The Cancer Focus NI van is critical in taking health messages right to the heart of our homes, communities and workplaces and I would appeal for all sectors to utilise this vital tool - after all, prevention and early intervention can quite literally save lives."

Joyce Savage, from Cancer Focus NI, said: "We were delighted to show Maeve some of the work we are involved in. This includes care services, cancer prevention work in local schools and colleges and stop smoking clinics in various community venues.

"We are very keen to let people in the North West know about our services and encourage people to make use of them."

## Best foot forward



Congratulations to everyone who took part in our Great Wall of China challenge event. You can take on a challenge anywhere in the world and raise funds for us.

If there is somewhere you have always wanted to trek, cycle, paddle or run please get in touch with us and we will find the perfect challenge at a time that suits you.

For more information contact Emma on **028 9068 0771** or email [events@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:events@cancerfocusni.org)

## Tug of war fun



Rachel Smith, Family Service Coordinator joins in the tug of war at the annual summer fun event for families who use our Family Support Service. This year we enjoyed some bush craft activities and games including making a shelter in the woods and building a fire at Oxford Island, Craigavon – a great day enjoyed by all!





## Sainsbury's support us

We are delighted that customers of Sainsbury's in Newry have chosen Cancer Focus NI as their Charity of the Year. We will be holding a number of fundraising and awareness raising events at the store throughout the year. Check

**www.cancerfocusni.org**, our Facebook and Twitter pages for more details. A big thank you to everyone involved! If you are interested in joining the Sainsbury's Newry volunteer group to assist with collections and other events for Cancer Focus NI contact Rosie on **rosieforsythe@cancerfocusni.org** or call **028 9068 0759**.



## Up the Lagan in a bubble!

Emma McArdle and Michelle Young from Cancer Focus NI warm up before taking part in our fundraiser where you actually go up the River Lagan in a bubble. We offer a full range of wacky and fun events - call Emma on **028 9068 0771** or email **events@cancerfocusni.org** for more information.

## #secretsanta



Our Family Support Service helps children when a mum, dad or close family member has cancer. This Christmas by changing your Facebook profile picture to your favourite photo with Santa, you can help raise awareness for local children affected by cancer. You can also help raise funds for our Family Support Service by becoming a Secret Santa. Donate today at **campaign.justgiving.com/charity/cancerfocusni/secretsanta**. We will be running this campaign again next year so be sure to look out for it!

## MediCare focuses on charity



Under the microscope - Michael Guerin, Managing Director, MediCare Pharmacy Group, focuses on health community issues along with Gerry McElwee, Head of Cancer Prevention at Cancer Focus NI. The leading local pharmacy group has announced its new charity partnership with Cancer Focus NI for 2015/2016. Staff at the 53 MediCare stores across Northern Ireland will help the charity raise funds as well as awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer. Our Keeping Well van will visit stores offering health checks, stop smoking support and lifestyle advice for staff and customers.

For more information email Rosie on **rosieforsythe@cancerfocusni.org** or call **028 9068 0759**.



## Welcome new students

Welcome to our new placement students who will be working here over the next year. We offer a wide range of work placement opportunities in cancer prevention, marketing and communications, providing students with practical work experience in the voluntary sector. Good luck and welcome to our team!



## Stopping traffic!

Thanks to Maurice Patton, proprietor of Ards Allotments, 100 Comber Road, Newtownards, who has wrapped his hay bales in pink to help raise awareness of our breast cancer campaign **#girlsnightin**



## Thank you volunteers!

This year we celebrated the outstanding contribution from all our volunteers with a very special Volunteer Party at Belfast City Hall.

Without your help we couldn't carry out our vital services which help cancer patients and families in Northern Ireland so a MASSIVE thank you to everyone in the volunteer team!



Volunteers bring the knowledge, skills and experience that is essential to our success and we currently need lots of extra help with our:

- Bra Fitting Service in Belfast and Ballymoney
- Driving Service in the Belfast and Newtownabbey areas
- Beauty for Life Service in Belfast, Dundonald and Craigavon
- Charity shops throughout Northern Ireland

For more information about these or any of our other volunteer opportunities contact Morag on **028 9066 3281** or email **moragchambers@cancerfocusni.org**

Congratulations to our Volunteer Coordinator Morag Chambers, who was shortlisted for Volunteer Manager of the Year in the prestigious UK-wide Third Sector awards. Well done Morag.



## Fundraise for Cancer Focus NI

Thanks to Freya Murray who presented Suzie Colledge, Cancer Focus NI, with £150 which was raised by collecting Coppers for Cancer. There are lots of ways you can get involved to help fund our work. We have a dedicated fundraising team who will work with you to help make your fundraising a great success! To contact the team email **fundraising@cancerfocusni.org** or call **028 9066 3281**.



## Garden makeover

Special thanks to Evelyn Burns who nominated us through the David Whiteside Forget Me Not Fund for a special award at Dobbies Garden Centre, Lisburn. As gold winners of the Here We Grow project, we received £1,000 worth of plants and gardening supplies from Dobbies. Pictured are staff from Lloyds Banking Group who volunteered their time to helping plant the new shrubs and flowers from Dobbies and improve our garden for cancer patients to enjoy.

For information on our upcoming events log onto  
**www.cancerfocusni.org**



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