

# bloom

Issue  
**01**  
May  
2009

## Reach to Recovery International - RRI

Reach to Recovery International is committed to working to improve the quality of life for women with breast cancer and their families.

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Discovering the benefits of mindfulness

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We do not walk alone

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## Special conference edition

15th UICC Reach to Recovery  
International Breast Cancer  
Support Conference



## Did you know

**Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women.**

In 2002 there were more than one million new cases of breast cancer diagnosed globally - this represents 10% of the world's cancer burden and 23% of all female cancers. There are now more than four million women living with breast cancer worldwide.

## Michelangelo's Night has breast cancer?

**A doctor has diagnosed breast cancer on a 500-year-old statue by Michelangelo.**

Art experts had wondered for years why the left breast on his marble work 'Night', which stands in the Medici chapel in the Church of San Lorenzo, in Florence, was misshapen.

The figure has a large bulge alongside a swollen nipple which has caused the skin on the opposite side to retract.

Until now, scholars had believed the features were due to Michelangelo's lack of interest or unfamiliarity with the female form.

Now Dr James Stark, a cancer specialist from Virginia in the US, and art historian Jonathan Nelson, from New York, believe the artist deliberately wanted to portray a woman with cancer.

Writing in the New England Journal of Medicine, they say: "we suggest Michelangelo carefully inspected a woman with advanced breast cancer and accurately reproduced physical signs in stone. He could have studied the corpse of a woman - autopsies were legal at the time".

Dahlgren, A.-L. (2003). Michelangelo and medicine. *J R Soc Med* 96: 256-256a

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**bloom**

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Bloom is published by Reach to Recovery International. Contributions to Bloom are welcome, please contact Anne Savage via email to [annesavage@cancerqld.org.au](mailto:annesavage@cancerqld.org.au). For more information about RRI, go to [www.reachtorecoveryinternational.org](http://www.reachtorecoveryinternational.org)



We respectfully acknowledge the Indigenous women of our global community, the traditional custodians of our environment.



**One Journey, Many People**  
The 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference will connect women from around the world. It will be the first global forum for women affected by breast cancer, held in Brisbane, Australia, from May 13-15, 2009.



# Message from Ann Steyn

President of Reach to Recovery

**It is a great pleasure to be in touch with you all again! When the November issue of Bloom was printed I mentioned that changes in RRI were afoot and we were not certain as to the form the next issue would take --- or even when it would be available.**

I did however say that we would be back soon with as much enthusiasm as before, with more information on breast cancer and inspiring stories of breast cancer initiatives around the world.

And here we are!

With the Brisbane RRI Conference almost upon us, the theme of this issue will echo the theme of the Conference "One Journey, Many People".

I wonder how many of you followed the amazing journey of the Message Stick as it travelled around the world covering all the continents and stopping off at more than 34 places. During this journey we heard from many groups of the work they are doing to support women with breast cancer and to raise the profile of breast cancer awareness. There was a common thread that ran through all the messages uniting us in the work we do. I hope you will enjoy reading more about this amazing journey and the other exciting activities planned for Brisbane.

As you know, Jeff Dunn, Ranjit Kaur and I have been tasked with drawing up a proposed development plan for RRI now that the UICC has formally launched us on the road to independence. It is an exciting and challenging time and you will find an article by Jeff Dunn giving an overview of where we are at the moment.

We are greatly indebted to the Cancer Council Queensland for their support of RRI. They have agreed to assist with Bloom for the time being, for which we are extremely grateful. Please continue to send in your news and stories. Remember, this is your publication and we welcome your comments and suitable articles.

The Brisbane conference promises to have one of the largest number of participants seen at a RRI Conference. There will be delegates from many countries around the world, and it will offer an excellent opportunity for us to learn from one another and share our ideas and experiences.

See you down under in Brisbane.

Until then, warm Reach To Recovery greetings. ◦

**Ann Steyn**  
President, Reach To Recovery



## The Ebers Papyrus

Breast cancer may be one of the oldest known forms of cancerous tumors in humans. The oldest description of cancer, the Ebers Papyrus, was discovered in Egypt and dates back to approximately 1550 BC. In terms of treatment, the papyrus recommended "do thou nothing there against".

The papyrus is one the two oldest preserved medical documents anywhere and is now held in the library of the University of Leipzig, Germany.

## The Pink Majlis Project and the Ladies of Courage

**The Ladies of Courage are a peer based support group who have used a traditional icon in Arab culture, a Majlis, to raise awareness about breast cancer among women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).**

Trish Snozyk, MD, Senior Consultant in Family Medicine at Sheikh Khalifa Medical City in Abu Dhabi, says the Pink Majlis Project has helped to overcome many of the barriers to providing women with peer support in a conservative Muslim culture.

"Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the United Arab Emirates. Unfortunately, many women present in later stages.

"The UAE is a strongly conservative Muslim culture where women are often isolated, making it a challenge to reach them to provide support when they have cancer and to educate them before a diagnosis is even made.

"Our support group, Ladies of Courage, was formed in 2004 and has overcome numerous obstacles, especially cultural ones. We have grown to a group of 10 breast cancer survivors who now meet monthly.

"It has been exciting to see these women blossom personally and relationally as well as to see their passion for awareness campaigning grow."

In Arab culture a majlis is a tent like structure that is a place of refuge, comfort and hospitality.

"Here in the UAE we have developed the idea of a Pink Majlis both figuratively and physically to communicate information about breast cancer," Dr Trish says.

"We have gone to rural communities and held "a Pink Majlis" where we talked to women about the fact that cancer is not contagious or not always hereditary and encouraged them to go for mammograms.

"We have built a large pink tent and held talks to educate and encourage breast cancer awareness. We have just sat and



talked with people who have come into the majlis to have a seat and a cup of coffee.

"In 2007 we even hosted Laura Bush in our Pink Majlis!" ◦

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**Dr Trish will deliver her presentation on the Pink Majlis Project to the 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference on Thursday May 14. For more information, send Dr Trish an email via [snopat725@skmc.gov.ae](mailto:snopat725@skmc.gov.ae).**

# Bums on bikes

**Many may wonder what Harley Davidson bikers and breast cancer survivors share in common.**

The answer, according to Malaysia's Breast Cancer Welfare Association Pink Challengers dragon boat team, is a simple one: a love of life and a longing for adventure.

Led by Harley Owners Group Malaysia Chapter, and also Joko Hurricane Max with his group of super bikers, 20 breast cancer survivors saddled up for the 'Bums on Bikes' motorcycle ride, demonstrating to the public that there is life after breast cancer and promoting early detection and timely evidence-based treatment for breast cancer. Carrying the theme "Courage, Strength and Change", the bikers and survivors were all set with full gear; the bikers in their biking gear and the survivors in their pink rashies, jeans and boots.

The spunky pillion riders were joined on the ride by a fleet of supporters who rode alongside the motorcycle convoy in their cars all the way from Kuala Lumpur to the UNESCO listed and historical city of Malacca.

The idea for the fundraising and awareness ride was inspired by Amazon Heart Thunder.

The co-founder and director of Amazon Heart Thunder, breast cancer survivor Megan Dwyer, also happens to be Conference Manager for the 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference.

"We created Amazon Heart to provide a unique and inspiring peer support opportunity for under-served groups of breast cancer survivors, particularly the young," Megan says.

"Our events create a broader social impact for women with breast cancer by funding projects that fill other needs, creating advocacy and awareness around breast cancer issues, and also provide volunteers and funding for local community social action projects."

The mission of Amazon Heart Thunder is to transform the lives of women living with breast cancer through adventure events that in themselves create a wider social impact in their local communities.

Megan congratulated the Pink Challengers for demonstrating how women affected by breast cancer can continue to celebrate life through adventure seeking and benefit finding.

The Bums on Bikes event also showed how celebrating hope can harness the spirit of a shared journey, beginning as a team of 60 bikers and growing to a group of 152 riders, all with different makes, models and types of motorcycles.

In championing the cause, the bikers wore pink, had pink

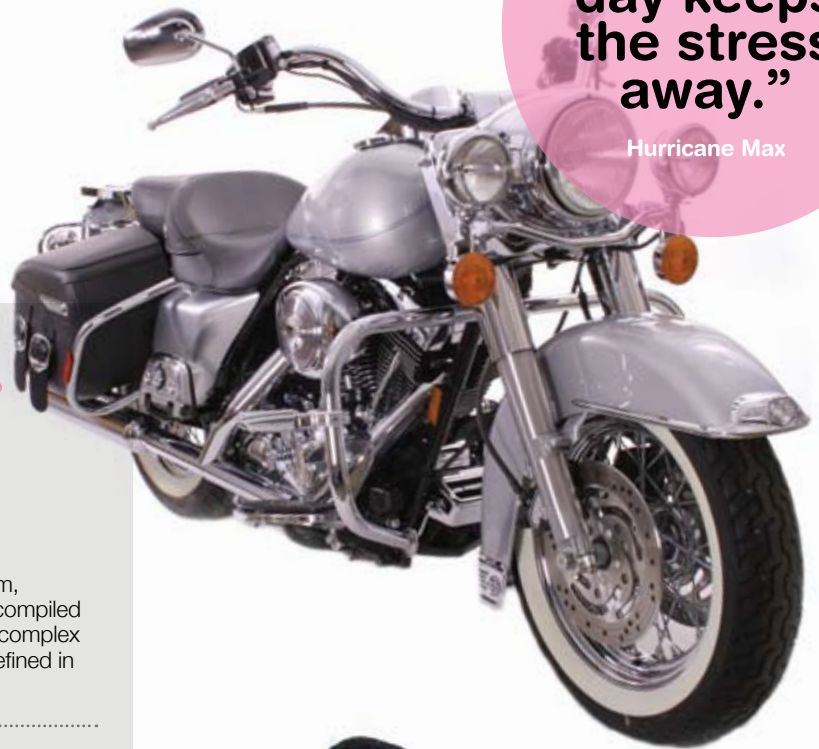
decorations or accessories on their bikes and wore pink ribbons on their shirts!

Wong Mee Yee, Team Captain of Pink Challengers and participant of Amazon Heart Thunder Australia 2007 concludes that "Riding on big machines like Harleys is certainly a more effective and fun way to get the public's attention about our breast cancer awareness campaign".

Amazon Heart Thunder will host a 10 day Australian ride for 39 women, from Brisbane to Sydney, during the Celebration of Hope. ◦

**"A ride a day keeps the stress away."**

Hurricane Max



## Breast cancer dictionary

**The information that women receive when they face a breast cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming, with technical terms that are unfamiliar and can be hard to understand.**

To address this problem, Breastcancer.org has compiled an online dictionary of complex breast cancer terms defined in plain English.

Just go to: <http://www.breastcancer.org/dictionary/>



### CANCER FACT:

**Breast cancer can also develop in men, although it is much less common. Male breast cancer accounts for about 1% of all breast cancer incidences.**





# Unique challenges with breast cancer:

## Women who partner with women

**When lesbians and their partners face a breast cancer diagnosis, they confront a range of challenges that do not exist for heterosexual couples and can negatively impact on quality of life.**

Wanda Cockrell is a breast cancer survivor and a lesbian whose partner is a breast cancer survivor living with metastatic breast cancer.

She knows all too well that the emotional experience of lesbians with breast cancer is uniquely challenging, and she is passionate about improving support for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

Wanda is Vice-Chair of the Mautner Project, an initiative of the National Lesbian Health Organisation in the United States.

In her presentation to delegates of the 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference, she will share her experiences and ideas about bringing an end to the social stigma and discrimination that affects lesbians with breast cancer.

“The fears are all too real for the lesbian partner. The traditional support groups do not address the needs of the partner.

“Access to quality care for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women is often hindered by social stigma and discrimination: as a group, lesbians are underinsured, typically lacking access to spouses’ health insurance, and to benefits such as the Family and Medical Leave Act, Social Security survivor benefits, and hospital visitation rights.

“Access is also diminished for women who partner with women who are reluctant to seek care because of the experience or fear of stigma or rejection.”

Wanda will share the findings from US research that has shown that lesbians delay health-seeking behaviours until they are symptomatic or until symptoms are at their worst.

“The limits of access have severe consequences, and the consequences are multiplied by the fact that stress-related behaviours and ailments, such as smoking, obesity, depression and anxiety, are more prevalent among lesbians than among their heterosexual counterparts.”

Her presentation will be an important step towards improving the quality of care for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women facing breast cancer. ◊

## Discovering the benefits of mindfulness

**The 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference will include a presentation by Elizabeth Foley, PhD, a Clinical Psychologist and Cancer Institute Research Fellow at the Sydney Cancer Centre in Australia.**

Her presentation will focus on Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for breast cancer.

Mindfulness is defined as “open or receptive attention to and awareness of ongoing events and experience” (245, Brown & Ryan, 2003). Another definition refers to mindfulness as remembering to pay attention in a certain way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a).

This approach is often taught through a variety of meditation

exercises. These exercises aim to increase awareness of the constantly changing internal and external experiences occurring in each moment (Baer, 2003).

Participants are encouraged to step out of habitual patterns of judgment and rumination as they fully engage with experience as it unfolds. Mindfulness meditation encourages participants to develop equanimity regarding the content of their experience and this serves to promote well-being.

Over the past two years almost 200 cancer patients and carers have completed the eight week Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy course at the Sydney Cancer Centre with Elizabeth Foley.

The course facilitates the development of moment to moment awareness without

judgement and has been received with great enthusiasm, demonstrating benefits and positive outcomes by helping patients and carers to adjust to their cancer diagnoses, improving quality of life, optimism and coping.

Elizabeth’s participants have praised the therapy:

“The practice of mindfulness meditation has allowed me to not be constantly preoccupied by the cancer activity/non-activity in my body. This is a great development, not only for my mental state but also because I feel that I can now get a more accurate idea of the actual physical symptoms and sensations in my body without self-diagnosing... I can give more accurate information and feedback to my doctors about what is happening in the present.”

“I felt an immediate benefit in terms of taking the pressure off the here-and-now. I learnt to take a greater degree of control over my habits of thought and action.”

“Meditation has helped me cope with anxiety and stress. I feel more calm.”

“It has given me a new way to look at the world.”

Elizabeth’s conference presentation will include current research ideas on post-traumatic growth and the development of self-compassion through mindfulness meditation by cancer patients and carers. ◊

**For more information about mindfulness therapy, go to the Sydney Cancer Centre website at [www.sydneycancer.com.au](http://www.sydneycancer.com.au)**

# World's first online relay for breast cancer

**In preparation for the 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference in Brisbane this May, Cancer Council Queensland has launched the world's first online relay for women affected by breast cancer.**

The unique Message Stick Relay will travel around the world, bringing women together online on their way to the conference. The relay began in Brisbane on March 12 and will arrive back in Brisbane for the conference opening on May 13.

Conference Organiser for Cancer Council Queensland, Megan Dwyer, says the Message Stick Relay will connect breast cancer patients and survivors in a journey of hope.

"The Message Stick Relay will travel to 30 destinations around the world.

"Along the way, women from around the world will log on to the website and upload photos and stories from their countries and local communities, growing our awareness of the diverse international responses to breast cancer."

The message stick is named Kayi Ngunta which means 'the pathway to knowledge' in Muruwari, an Indigenous Australian language from far northwest New South Wales.

Ms Dwyer, a breast cancer survivor, says the relay will play an important role in building capacity and support networks for women affected by breast cancer in developing countries.

"By connecting women from around the world, and drawing us together for the conference in May, we hope to strengthen emotional support and build active peer support networks, particularly in countries and places that might not have easy access to health services.

"These may be women in regional and remote locations in our own country, or women in developing nations, who face the additional challenges of inadequate diagnostic, treatment and support services.

"The aim of the relay, and the conference, is to support international efforts to stop suffering, improve treatment, and strengthen emotional support for women with breast cancer," she said.

Ms Dwyer said a real version of the message stick, created by Indigenous artist Michael Connolly, would feature in the conference opening, symbolising the stories shared over the course of the online journey.

"The message stick depicts the pathway of knowledge with the circles of life, symbolising eternity; rays of sunshine, symbolising hope and courage; and a meeting place, symbolising our connection to one another.

"The message stick also features three female spirit dancers, to symbolise strength, empowerment, and beauty. They dance together and share in the journey of hope."

According to Chief Executive Officer of Cancer Council Queensland, Prof Jeff Dunn,



**The Message Stick Relay will travel to 30 destinations around the world**

Queensland is leading the relay as a global player in the race to eliminate breast cancer.

"Queensland is playing a significant part in giving women affected by breast cancer the opportunity to build new support networks with women from all corners of the globe, to empower local action that addresses breast cancer.

"Nearly 600 women from around the world have registered to attend the conference, and we expect many more will log on to get involved in the relay." ◦

Log on to the Message Stick Relay at [www.themessagestick.com](http://www.themessagestick.com).

The 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference will be held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre from May 13 to 15. For more information, go to [www.reachtotherecovery2009.org/](http://www.reachtotherecovery2009.org/).



## Kayi Ngunta

**The Message Stick for the 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference.**

The Message Stick is a symbol of the ongoing connection between us, engaging breast cancer survivors in a lifelong journey of hope.

The message stick is named Kayi Ngunta which means 'the pathway to knowledge' in Muruwari, an Indigenous Australian language from far northwest New South Wales.

The message stick design depicts the pathway of knowledge with the circles of life, symbolising eternity; rays of sunshine, symbolising hope and courage; and a meeting place, symbolising our connection to one another.

The message stick also features three female spirit dancers, to symbolise strength, empowerment, and beauty. They dance together and share in our journey of hope.

Our online Message Stick has travelled the globe on its way to the conference, drawing us together.

The Message Stick plays a symbolic role in guiding our path, helping to inspire our focus on building capacity and support networks for women around the world who are affected by breast cancer. ◦



# Global perspectives on awareness:

## New program provides hope for rural villagers in India

**The Thar Desert, also known as the Great South Asian Desert, is a windy and arid area of North West India.**

With a rapidly increasing population of over 12 million people, the region is under tremendous stress due to drought, overgrazing, and ecosystem deterioration.

Medical oncologist and palliative care specialist, Dr Suresh Sanchetee, says the provision of adequate health services poses a serious challenge in the region.

"In rural areas, where 67 per cent of the population lives, traditional systems of rule and patriarchal values still affect the freedom of movement and basic rights for women.

"With this, psychosocial problems are increasing, whereby stress, depression, and poor lifestyle behaviours have become common concerns for many women."

In response to a lack of oncology services and prevention and screening programs, Dr Sanchetee is now working with local health professionals and the Cancer Institute of Jodhpur to implement a breast cancer awareness program in the region.

"We have selected two local districts for the pilot program.

From each district we have engaged with the female village chiefs, called Aganwadi, who usually work in agricultural occupations and live rurally.

"We provide village chiefs with a one day training program at Sanchetee hospital, enlisting the help of medical and health professionals to give the training.

"The training materials include information pamphlets about breast cancer, highlighting the location and schedule for free early detection services in the local region.

"Following the training, our health workers keep in contact with these Aganwadi to encourage referrals for screening and self-checks."

Dr Sanchetee says the initial response to the program has been positive, with high rates of referral and interest in the program.

"We plan to continue expanding the program in the future and hope to make a big difference to improve outcomes for women from local villages who are impacted by breast cancer." ◦

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**If you'd like more information about the program, please email Dr Suresh Sanchetee via [rcure@gmail.com](mailto:rcure@gmail.com).**



A group of Indian women welcome the Message Stick on its way to the conference.

# Dragons on the Penang Channel



**"Women affected by breast cancer can overcome tough times and triumph."**

Ranjit Kaur

**Fifteen bold breast cancer survivors from Malaysia recently harnessed their lust for adventure by becoming the first dragon boat team to paddle nearly four kilometres across the Penang Channel.**

The aptly named and outfitted Pink Challengers dragon boat team, representing the Breast Cancer Welfare Association (BCWA) of Malaysia, took only 32 minutes to complete the challenge, beating an expected time of 45 minutes.

The event was a celebration of life to raise local awareness of breast cancer.

Among the, paddlers, aged 38 to 72, was association president and past president of Reach to Recovery International, Ranjit Kaur.

Ranjit says the challenge proved once and for all that women affected by breast cancer can overcome tough times and triumph.

Team captain, Wong Mee Yee, said the weather conditions were relatively calm for their challenging journey.

According to team manager, Barbara Delaney, the team trained vigorously beginning in January 2009, after coming up with the idea in 2007.

The Penang Channel Challenge was organised by the BCWA with support from the Penang Tourism Committee.

Penang Port Commission Chairman, Madame Tan Cheng Liang, officially launched the paddlers from the mainland.

They were accompanied by a supporting dragon boat with paddlers from the Royal Australian Air Force.

Upon arrival across the Channel, they were greeted by a large crowd of supporters, and were presented with certificates of achievement from State Tourism Development, Culture, Arts and Heritage Committee Chairman, YB Danny Law Heng Kiang.

All present observed a moment of silence during a flowers-on-water ceremony where the team and supporters threw pink flowers into the sea, in memory of those who have fought and lost the battle against breast cancer, and as a tribute to those who are still fighting.

Keep an eye out at the conference for representatives from the team and from BCWA! ◦

# You Are Not Alone:

a film about living with secondary breast cancer

## What does it mean to be 'a survivor' when you have secondary breast cancer?

It is distressing to experience breast cancer, undergo a period of treatment and recovery, and resume a 'normal' life. But what if the cancer returns or is ongoing, as is the case for women with secondary breast cancer? How do you survive, let alone live a full and meaningful life?

This 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference will include a case study presentation by Group Therapist for the Advanced Breast Cancer Group in Brisbane, Mary O'Brien, on survivorship in the context of secondary breast cancer.

Mary will share her story of how a group of women got together with a film crew to make a documentary of their experience of living with secondary breast cancer, to be used as a resource for other women.

The film "You're Not Alone - a film about living with secondary breast cancer" is a story that highlights the resilience of women living with secondary breast cancer.

They talk about what it was like when they were first diagnosed with this life threatening illness, and their journey into uncharted

territory as they learned to cope, with the support of their family, friends and other women in a professionally led support group.

Since its launch in 2008, the film has helped many Australian women with secondary breast cancer to cope with their diagnosis.

It has also served as an information and awareness tool for partners and families of women with secondary breast cancer, increasing their knowledge of the disease and improving their understanding of the emotional experience that women with breast cancer face.

Importantly, the film highlights the emotional impact of a breast cancer diagnosis and portrays how the distress that many women experience can interfere with the assimilation of complex information, demonstrating to health professionals the importance of clear and thoughtful communication.

The film was launched by then Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce AC, now the Governor-General of Australia and a patron of the 15th UICC Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference.

Speaking at the launch in April last year, Her Excellency confirmed the importance of reaching out for support:

"As each of these women shares her own insights, we glimpse a journey that is uncertain, arduous, painful, shadowed. No-one can tell them when it will end. Yet their walk along it is honest and brave, lit up by unquenchable hope. They are learning and accepting, talking, sharing, searching in themselves and those around them," Her Excellency said at the launch. ◦



## St Agatha of Sicily

In the Christian tradition, Saint Agatha of Sicily is the patron saint of breast cancer patients. Her written legend suggests that she was persecuted for her faith and tortured by having her breasts cut off. According to Christian theology, she was

cured by a religious vision and martyred in 251AD. She is often depicted being tortured, as in *The Martyrdom of Saint Agatha*, by Sebastiano del Piombo, 1519 (Palazzo Pitti).



## CANCER FACT:

**Worldwide, breast cancer is the second most common type of cancer after lung cancer (10.4 per cent of all cancer incidence, both sexes counted) and the fifth most common cause of cancer death. In 2004, breast cancer caused 519,000 deaths worldwide (7 per cent of cancer deaths; almost 1 per cent of all deaths).**

**Source: World Health Organisation**



# We do not walk alone

**These poems have been written by one of the Reach to Recovery volunteers I trained a couple of years ago.**

Her name is Annette La Touche.

She lives in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. I have kept in touch with her over the years and, as with all our excellent volunteers, she really is a very special person.

Annette has secondary breast cancer and has written movingly about her experiences. She has been receiving treatment in Holland, but last week returned home for her 60th birthday.

Unfortunately, due to her treatment, Annette is not able to join us at the conference. She will, however, be with us in spirit, and will hopefully receive our embrace by connecting with us online. I wrote to Annette to ask her permission to print one of her poems for this special edition of Bloom.

What follows is her reply to my request, and then one of her poems, titled 'Just a Walk in the Park'. ◦

Ann Steyn

# Written with love

Dear Ann,

The MRI results were good, thank goodness, but two of the lymph nodes are rather restless and will need zapping. In fact about three weeks ago I landed in the emergency room because a lymph grew so fast (up to five cm) in just a few hours. It has calmed down a bit now, but I expect to start 10 sessions of radiation next week. This means yet another delay in returning home. Each time I am away I miss Tanzania terribly. I console myself with Swahili songs – they give me strength and hope. Whatever the case, I am very lucky that I am able to get treated here in Holland and I count my blessings.

I feel upset that I cannot be at the conference. The programme looks wonderful, covering so many interesting topics - most very relevant to my own situation i.e; facing challenges of secondary (metastatic) breast cancer, impact on families, peer support (quality of life) and lymphoedema. I am afraid I am going to miss a great opportunity to learn from the vast pool of knowledge of so many brave people and sadly I too will not be able to make my contribution regarding my years filled with exciting experiences on treatment, coping, peer support

and more recently fundraising. I am most regretful because I believe that one of the reasons I am still alive today is to share my experiences to help others. Still, I hope that there will be another chance.

I have written about 40 or so poems. On many I have added a note at the bottom where I give some explanation about why I wrote the poem, to give context and add meaning. It is very kind of you to offer to share them and I hope you will find meaning in them. I would be honoured to have one printed in Bloom. Please pick whatever you think will be suitable.

The writing really helps me a lot, but what I truly want is to reach out and touch other lives, to give hope and to make a difference - even if a little.

You will note that the poems are relevant to the topics at the conference. I would have loved to share some at the conference. Do you think there is any way at all that this can be done?

Good luck and enjoy it. ◦

Annette La Touche



## JUST A WALK IN THE PARK

Breast Cancer why do you haunt me?  
Is once not enough?

Fear and confusion reign  
Hollowness and numbness gain  
Anguished with pain  
Yet, tears do not drain

A crumpled heap on the floor  
Life is so flawed

Gathering my pieces she gives me  
Hope and courage  
And in warmth and love she clothes  
My fragile frame

By my hand she leads me  
Slowly through the park  
To the other side she takes me  
Giving me reason to live

"This time it will be  
Just a walk in the park,  
Mum, you will survive" she remarks

Annette La Touche, 12th August 2008

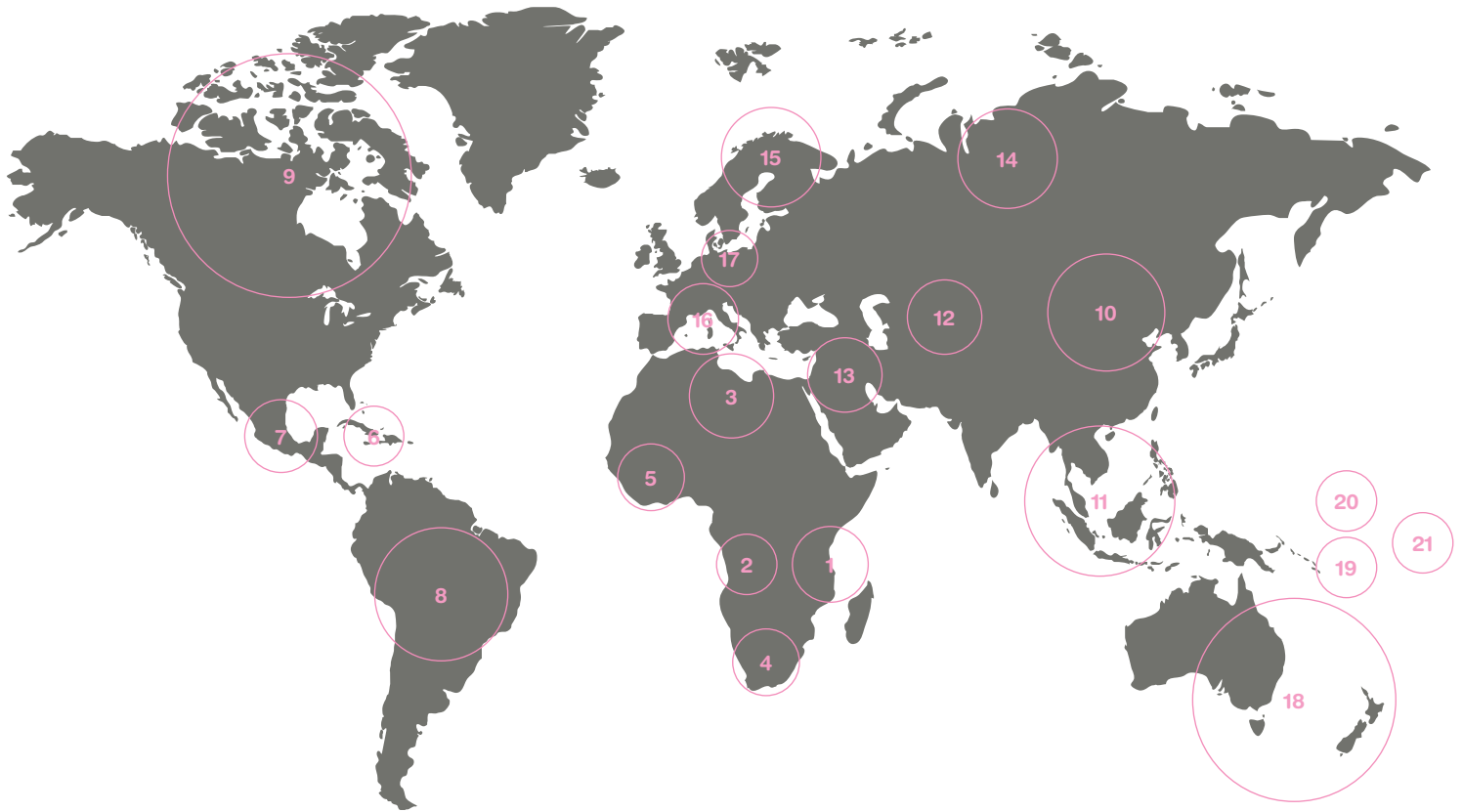
*I wrote this for my daughter Charlene de Zoete. Charlene was in China when she got the news of my recurrence in October 2006. She rang me and told me that I should not worry, that this time it will be just a walk in the park as we had been through it before.*

*I was in pretty bad shape and a few days later I was evacuated from Dar es Salaam to the Netherlands for treatment. Just three days later Charlene arrived and cared for me with great tenderness for nearly a year. I was amazed by the courage of this young lady as she stood by me while I battled breast cancer for the second time. Charlene has given me the will to live and I have great admiration for her.*

*As for the walk, it has been wobbly but here we are today enjoying life's little pleasures!*

# Breast cancer worldwide:

A snapshot of incidence and mortality



<b>Eastern Africa</b> <sup>1</sup> Cases diagnosed: 15,564 Women who died: 10,974	<b>Caribbean</b> <sup>6</sup> Cases diagnosed: 6,424 Women who died: 2,478	<b>South-Eastern Asia</b> <sup>11</sup> Cases diagnosed: 58,495 Women who died: 26,818	<b>Southern Europe</b> <sup>16</sup> Cases diagnosed: 72,458 Women who died: 24,617
<b>Middle Africa</b> <sup>2</sup> Cases diagnosed: 5,173 Women who died: 3,711	<b>Central America</b> <sup>7</sup> Cases diagnosed: 14,240 Women who died: 5,679	<b>South-Central Asia</b> <sup>12</sup> Cases diagnosed: 133,802 Women who died: 67,165	<b>Western Europe</b> <sup>17</sup> Cases diagnosed: 125,604 Women who died: 39,297
<b>Northern Africa</b> <sup>3</sup> Cases diagnosed: 16,588 Women who died: 11,751	<b>South America</b> <sup>8</sup> Cases diagnosed: 75,907 Women who died: 24,681	<b>Western Asia</b> <sup>13</sup> Cases diagnosed: 25,163 Women who died: 10,738	<b>Australia/New Zealand</b> <sup>18</sup> Cases diagnosed: 13,507 Women who died: 3,338
<b>Southern Africa</b> <sup>4</sup> Cases diagnosed: 6,474 Women who died: 3,130	<b>Northern America</b> <sup>9</sup> Cases diagnosed: 229,631 Women who died: 48,239	<b>Central &amp; Eastern Europe</b> <sup>14</sup> Cases diagnosed: 100,262 Women who died: 45,310	<b>Melanesia</b> <sup>19</sup> Cases diagnosed: 474 Women who died: 220
<b>Western Africa</b> <sup>5</sup> Cases diagnosed: 21,397 Women who died: 14,833	<b>Eastern Asia</b> <sup>10</sup> Cases diagnosed: 167,525 Women who died: 47,866	<b>Northern Europe</b> <sup>15</sup> Cases diagnosed: 62,425 Women who died: 19,789	<b>Micronesia</b> <sup>20</sup> Cases diagnosed: 99 Women who died: 47
			<b>Polynesia</b> <sup>21</sup> Cases diagnosed: 84 Women who died: 38

Source: Globocan 2002 IARC

GLOBOCAN 2002 presents estimates for the year 2002. However, although the populations of the different countries are those estimated for the middle of 2002, the disease rates are not those for the year 2002, but from the most recent data available, generally 2-5 years earlier.



# Conference welcome:

## Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce AC

**Over a generation, I have had the pain and pleasure to observe the response of women to breast cancer - individually and collectively, in small communities and across the nation. Their worlds are rocked, but they find balance. The shadows darken, but they sustain light and hope, transforming and empowering their own journeys and those who walk beside them.**

I've marvelled at the fortitude and energy they've drawn upon; their rigorous enquiry and ceaseless advocacy. Most of all, at the way they've made us a society conscious, informed, protective, generous. They are the true leaders and pioneers in women's health: the finest model for how we ought to understand and nourish our shared humanity.

I am very proud to add my voice and hopes to a campaign that celebrates life and the special and strong bonds that women share.

Your conference acknowledges the fathomless commitment and untiring optimism of breast cancer supporters, and provides a forum for exchange and vision, new pathways and well-tried truths to emerge and glow in your midst.

I extend to you my warmest admiration and best wishes for a stimulating, encouraging and life affirming conference in 2009. ◦

.....  
**Her Excellency Quentin Bryce AC**  
**Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia**



## The 'Kylie' Effect

**There is evidence of a 'celebrity effect' when well known people experience cancer.**

For example, when the famous Australian entertainer Kylie Minogue was diagnosed with breast cancer, there was a 40 per cent increase in women making appointments for breast screening

in Australia. In the two weeks following the announcement that she would undergo surgery to have a cancerous lump removed, there were double the usual number of bookings from women aged 40-69 who had not previously been screened.

Celebrities have the power to capture the attention of

people who are not engaged by conventional public health messaging, and can provide powerful support for awareness raising and fundraising efforts. ◦



## ROC – Rock online with us at the Reach to Recovery Online Community

**This conference is just the start of a journey that will continue online at ROC <http://reachtorecovery.ning.com/>, a special social networking site that will link us together to build a stronger global community of women affected by breast cancer.**

ROC – the Reach to Recovery Conference Online Community is

a special, members only, online community. It is a free space to share your ideas and feelings, seek information about peer support, source conference materials, and exchange information with other women.

During each day of the conference, we'll submit daily updates on ROC, to get our conversations going. You'll be able to meet other delegates

and speakers online, engaging in meaningful chat about issues that are important to all of us.

You can join a range of discussion groups, make a comment on our central forum, or post a question on our billboard.

ROC is password protected, personalised, and empowering. It is the world's first online community dedicated to linking

breast cancer support groups and volunteers around the world.

We want you to be a part of our online community as it grows to inspire others like you. Log on to ROC and continue our journey! ◦



# Imagining the future for RRI

**Reach to Recovery commenced as a programme of the American Cancer Society in the 1950s. In 1994 Reach to Recovery was transferred to the UICC and became Reach to Recovery International (RRI).**

The mission of Reach to Recovery is built around the principle of peer support, where one woman previously diagnosed and treated for breast cancer can be a valuable source of support for another woman recently diagnosed. In the last edition of Bloom, Elizabeth Brien (nee Betty McCrum) a past President of RRI discussed the origins and global development of the programme.

Around the world, demand for breast cancer related programmes and services continue to escalate and the RRI programme has had to adapt to a changing and complex environment. Today, as we head into the 15th RRI Breast Cancer Support Conference in Brisbane, Australia, the dual challenge to remain viable and remain relevant has never been greater for RRI.

In recent years the strategic focus of the UICC has shifted from direct intervention and service provision to more advocacy, networking and member development activities. As a consequence, there have been discussions about how well the RRI programme fits within the UICC and whether there may be more appropriate arrangements for its continuation.

One such model might be where the RRI programme would be housed within a supportive UICC member organization, one that can demonstrate the necessary capacity and commitment.

To this end, the UICC established a RRI Transition Group made up of Mrs Ann Steyn (President of RRI), Ms Ranjit Kaur (immediate Past President of RRI and current Board Member of UICC) and myself. We are currently considering options and do hope to be in a position to report upon progress in the very near future. Whatever the outcome, I assure you that our deliberations are driven by one priority and one priority only, that being the control of breast cancer on a global basis.

The advent of the 15th RRI Breast Cancer Support Conference is an important milestone for RRI, acknowledging and celebrating the power of shared personal experience.

In my dual role as Chairman of the conference organising committee and advisor to RRI, I am very pleased to welcome you to our Celebration of Hope. The theme of our conference is 'One Journey, Many People'. We are honoured to be joined on this journey by the many passionate and committed supporters of RRI, and look to the future with optimism.

Yours in service,

.....  
**Jeff Dunn**  
Advisor to RRI and UICC  
Chairman, Conference Organising Committee



## Our mission

**Reach to Recovery International is built on a simple yet universal principle: a woman who has lived through breast cancer and gives of her time and experience to help another woman confronting the same experience is a valuable source of support. Reach to Recovery International is committed to working to improve the quality of life for women with breast cancer and their families through a wide range of services offered worldwide.**

For more information about RRI and bloom, please email [info@reachtorecoveryinternational.org](mailto:info@reachtorecoveryinternational.org) or visit our website at [www.reachtorecoveryinternational.org](http://www.reachtorecoveryinternational.org)