

Impact

WINTER 2024

Your legacy –
creating a better
future for
New Zealanders
facing cancer



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Research Fellow
Anastasiia

Incredible Research on Endometrial Cancer!



Anastasiia is a Research Fellow at the Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre. Originally from Ukraine, Anastasiia came to New Zealand eight years ago to pursue her PhD. Last year she was awarded a post-doctoral fellowship from the Cancer Society and started her own project dedicated to endometrial cancer.

“It’s the most common gynaecological cancer in the world. But the current problem with endometrial cancer is that the available current tests for diagnosis and treatment are invasive. That’s why less and less women decide to go and be diagnosed, and then decline the treatment.

With my research, we are trying to solve these problems and offer affordable and minimally invasive tests to get patients diagnosed early.”

The project is currently in its second microbial study phase, and if all goes well, the tests will be clinically trialled by 2025!

“We are aiming to find biomarkers for early detection of endometrial cancer and are exploring two different avenues. First, we are looking at the signals that are sent directly from the tumours and can be detected in a blood sample. By examining specific proteins in the patients’ blood, we aim to determine not only whether the person has cancer but also what type of cancer it is.

The second approach will examine whether a certain bacteria in the uterus could indicate the presence of endometrial cancer.

Thus, with two different approaches we are trying to design clinical tests that are easy to

administer, minimally invasive, and better accepted by our patients to detect endometrial cancer early.”

Researchers like Anastasiia couldn’t do any of this without your support.

“I’m focusing on cancer research because cancer remains one of the leading causes of death worldwide. And each year millions of lives are being affected by this.

For someone considering a donation to Cancer Society, I would say that by donating you become part of the solution. Your donation directly funds the research that can change the current cancer statistics for the better.”

From Andrew's Desk

Welcome to the latest edition of our Circle of Hope Impact newsletter. As we look towards spring, I hope the enclosed stories from patients and supporters alike will warm your heart.

August always brings a flurry of excitement for the team at Cancer Society as we celebrate Daffodil Day, a fixture in our calendar since 1990. For 34 years, Daffodil Day has inspired Kiwis to come together in the fight against cancer, raising awareness and supporting the Cancer Society's vital work.

This year, as part of this iconic campaign, we had the privilege of hearing from several staff members who shared their personal connections to cancer, and why the Cancer Society means so much to them. Their stories serve as a poignant reminder of the impact cancer has on so many. Read Nurse Rachel's story on page three to learn about her 'why'.

Within this Newsletter you will also discover Angie, who was inspired to leave a gift in her Will (page 4), learn about exciting cancer research from researcher Anastasiia (page 1), and learn more about our free Will offer in partnership with Footprint (below).

Thank you for your dedication and ongoing support of our essential work, both now and in the future. Your contributions are a powerful way to help protect our children and grandchildren through groundbreaking cancer research, life-saving prevention programmes, and crucial support for Kiwis facing cancer. We couldn't do it without you.



Chief Executive, Andrew Young

Ngā Mihi,

Andrew Young
Chief Executive Officer

Footprint Free Will Offer!



Head to www.myfootprint.co.nz/org/cancersociety to get started.

Having an up-to-date Will is the best way to ensure your wishes are followed and your loved ones are looked after when you're gone.

Your Will is also a place you can make sure the causes close to your heart are remembered, giving you the opportunity to make a lasting impact for future generations.

We've teamed up with a trusted on-line Will writer, Footprint, who help make writing or updating your Will easy. This partnership enables Cancer Society supporters to write their Wills for free for a limited time.

If you haven't yet created your Will, or know someone who needs to update their Will, make the most of this incredible opportunity. It's a simple way to start your journey to change the future of cancer treatment and care for all New Zealanders.

Nurse Rachel Channels her Mum's Strength

Cancer Society Nurse Rachel Carter is deeply passionate about her role. After many years working in haematology at Auckland Hospital, Rachel sought a more personal connection with her patients and found the perfect fit with the Cancer Society.

"It gives me the opportunity to go into people's homes and have the luxury of spending a little more time with them and helping them in a different way than I would do in the hospital ward."

In her day-to-day work, Rachel phones or visits patients, providing essential support and advice on all aspects of cancer and its impact. This includes managing symptoms, side effects, medications, the effects on family and work, and connecting families with additional support services they may need.



Nurse Rachel Carter

"I think this role is perfect for bridging the gap between people in the community and the hospitals.

So people get a truckload of information at the hospitals, and they are listening to all of it but not necessarily taking it all on board. So we can be that bridge and support...

With our role, they are getting optimal care and certainly more connections, because we can refer them to other teams and services [where needed]."

For Rachel, her bond with her patients goes beyond observation - it's deeply personal. After years of supporting Kiwi families facing cancer, Rachel's own world was upended when her beloved mum was diagnosed with melanoma.

"My mum was really brave. Just before Covid hit, so a scary time for everyone anyway, my mum was diagnosed with melanoma. She had a big tumour on her leg.

Mum did have immunotherapy for a while, which worked really well for her. But unbeknownst to all of us, she had bowel cancer as well. So she only had a treatment for a couple of months and then she had an emergency event, unexpectedly passing away in hospital."

As Rachel continues her important work as a Cancer Society Nurse, she channels her mum's strength every day.

"Hopefully I channel a lot of her strength in my role. She was really strong even though she was really scared of treatment and chemotherapy like a lot of people are, so hopefully I channel that strength, but I also take that compassion and understanding, that firsthand understanding, as awful as it is, it can make me a better kinder person."



Rachel holds a photo of her mum

We are so glad to have wonderful nurse Rachel on our Cancer Society team. In the last year, thousands of New Zealanders had been supported by Cancer Society nurses around the country, an incredible feat only made possible because of support from kind people like you. Thank you.

In Memory of Kent

Angie, a loving mum of two sons, a dog, and three cats leads a busy but fulfilling life. However, her early 20's were marked by a series of tragic events that inspired her to leave a gift in her Will.

"It was horrendous. We had literally just lost my mum (at only 53 years old), and then three weeks later my younger brother was dealing with this lump on his foot."

Angie's younger brother Kent, only 23 years old, was diagnosed with cancer. It was a tragic time for the family still grieving the loss of their mum, when Kent began a series of radiation treatments.

After his doctors gave him the all clear, Kent returned to Nelson and continued his work as an early childcare educator. **But devastatingly, just a year later, the cancer returned aggressively to his lungs.** Kent's health rapidly declined.

"Kent had recently become a dad and he was devastated that he wasn't going to see his son grow up..."

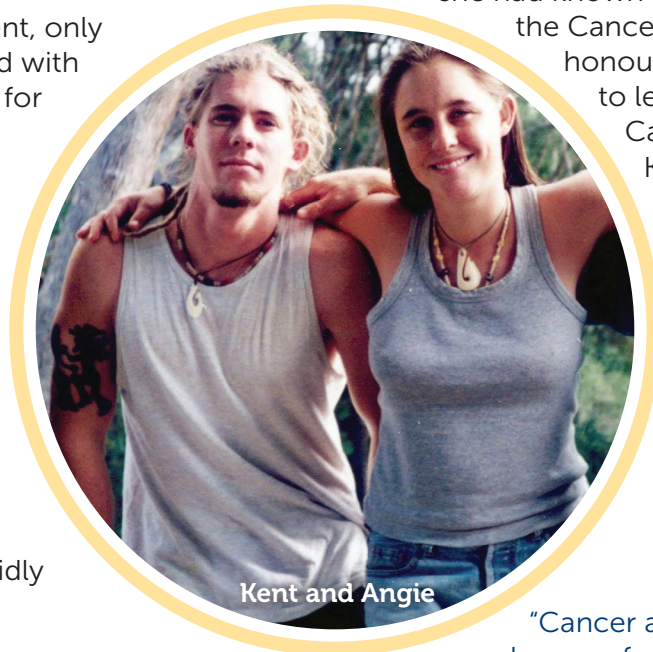
Having his son – he thought it was the best thing to ever happen to him."

Angie moved into Kent's hospice room during his final week. Despite the heartbreaking circumstances, Kent's kindness and selflessness shone through.

"He was amazing. Obviously, he didn't want to die, no one does, but even in the hospice, only a few days before he died, he asked the nurses if there was anyone sicker than him. He felt bad that he might be taking a bed that someone else might need more than him.

And that's always the sort of attitude he had."

Reflecting on her brother's journey, Angie wishes she had known more about the support the Cancer Society could provide. In honour of Kent, she has decided to leave a gift in her Will to the Cancer Society to support Kiwis facing cancer.



Kent and Angie

"I just feel if you have the means to do it, why wouldn't you help as many people as possible?"

"Cancer affects everyone in some shape or form, whether that's a family member, a friend or just someone you know, and it just makes such a difference to [someone's journey] to have that help and support."

Angie's generous gift will ensure our support services continue for future generations to come, ensuring every family has wraparound care throughout their cancer journey. It will also help us continue investing in ground-breaking cancer research. It's an incredible gift, and we are so grateful.

If you would like to know more about leaving a life-changing gift in your Will, please call Jennifer on 09 930 7172 or email legacy@akcansoc.org.nz.