

## New therapy for metastatic breast cancer goes from clinical trial to standard of care in record time.

*Donor support of local clinical trials helps bring hope to metastatic breast cancer patients in Ottawa*



*Dr. Shailendra Verma*

“Understanding tumour biology is complex” explains Ottawa oncologist Dr. Shailendra Verma. Over the past 30 years, Dr. Verma has led many important clinical trials in Ottawa that have brought about a number of advances in the treatment of breast cancer. He has also treated hundreds of women with breast cancer employing new evidence based therapies as they became available. “Our understanding of cancer on the molecular level has greatly advanced. More and more, the new

therapies that are being developed are molecular-based and we now have a growing number of targeted therapies that we know will work with that person’s individual tumor biology.”

Metastatic breast cancer, cancer that has spread beyond the breast, has many treatment options but none are curative. Increasingly, the therapies are directed to the various *subtypes* of breast cancer, e.g. estrogen receptor (ER) positive or HER-2 positive etc. The most common subtype is ER positive, in which case the cancer is dependent on estrogen for growth.

Such cancers are treated with a variety of antiestrogens such as tamoxifen. For almost 10 years there have been no *major* advances in the treatment of this subtype of breast cancer but a number of newer agents are now being tested that target specific growth pathways of this cancer. Palbociclib is one such treatment. The drug was tested in the Paloma-3 clinical trial here in Ottawa and at a number of other sites around the world.

“This trial brings the treatment of metastatic breast cancer which is estrogen dependent (ER positive) a significant step forward,” reports Dr. Verma. Due to the avid participation of women worldwide the study was completed early, and based on the positive results, it’s anticipated that palbociclib will become part of standard therapy protocols for this subtype of breast cancer.

The Paloma-3 clinical trial is just one of nearly 200 clinical trials that are running in Ottawa and are made possible, in part, by donors to the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation.

Palbociclib was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in February 2015 and is currently going through final regulatory approval in Canada. Dr. Verma expects that this new option for metastatic breast cancer patients who are resistant to existing endocrine therapy will be available as a treatment option for patients in Ottawa in the very near future.

**Your support of local clinical trials helps all breast cancer patients**

**Nine new drugs that were not available 10 years ago**

Palbociclib is not the only local clinical trials success story made possible by your support. Over the past 10 years, 9 breast cancer drugs are now standard of care as a result of clinical trials in which Ottawa patients participated and helped bring to fruition.

**Eribulin** **Trastuzumab**  
Letrozole **Pertuzumab**  
**Anastrozole** Goserelin acetate  
**Exemestane Nab-paclitaxel**  
**Trastuzumab emtansine**

# 'Miracle Lady' Defies the Odds

*For years, Toni McVeigh didn't know that cancer was spreading in her body. She is now living well after participating in a groundbreaking clinical trial that is giving hope to those with metastatic breast cancer.*

Toni McVeigh was looking forward to the breast reduction surgery that would ease her back pain. But a month after the surgery in 2007, she received surprising news. She had breast cancer. While it came as a shock, the good news was that the cancer was caught early. She followed the recommendation of her doctors and underwent a bilateral mastectomy. To the relief of Toni, her husband Bryan, and their two grown sons, she required no further treatment.

For the next five years, Toni's life was back to normal. She spent her summers at the cottage and enjoyed getting out to golf. It wasn't until Toni developed a persistent and hard to treat cough that her doctors made a frightening discovery. Her breast cancer had spread to her lungs and liver.

It wasn't long after that Toni developed eye problems. There was a tumour in her eye. An MRI found that the cancer had spread to

***...tumours have shrunk back to the point where they are now "hard to see."***

her brain. A bone scan detected more cancer. The cancer in her body was gaining the upper hand and Toni was running out of treatment options. That's when she decided to try clinical trials. The trials gave her access to new therapies and hope.

"I joined the Paloma-3 trial in March 2014. It's actually my third



*Toni McVeigh (second from right) with her husband and sons*

time on a trial. My doctors said I responded well to the drugs." Respond well, she did. Today, Toni's doctor reports that the tumours have shrunk back to the point where they are now "hard to see."

In fact, many women on the trial saw significant improvements. The results were so convincing that the trial ended early and the therapy is now going through final regulatory approvals in Canada and is already approved for use in the United States. It will be a standard treatment for women with this type of metastatic breast cancer, providing another treatment option for patients. "I'm so pleased that other women in my situation will be able to get this treatment," says Toni.

Dr. Shailendra Verma, the trial's lead investigator, sees the clinical trials process as a real team effort involving the clinical trials office, investigators and patients, "I have to give so much credit to the women who took part in this

trial. They have played a major role in the discovery and innovation process."

Toni says she feels well but admits that her energy levels are not what they were before the cancer, "I'm just grateful to be able to spend time with my grandson. And I still golf and spend much of my time at the cottage enjoying the lake, that is, until the snow flies."

Toni adds with a smile "My oncologist Dr. Clemons, calls me the 'Miracle Lady'. I guess I am."

Toni McVeigh was one of seven women in Ottawa who took part in the groundbreaking Paloma-3 clinical trial under lead investigator Dr. Shailendra Verma. This clinical trial involved 521 women from around the world with metastatic breast cancer whose cancer had progressed on the standard treatments. ***Without donor support, this trial would not have been possible in Ottawa.***

# Cancer Coaching gave Jen support and information when she needed it

## Now Jen is giving back

Jen Mielke wasn't worried the day she went for a mammogram and ultrasound. Even her doctor didn't think the lump Jen had discovered in her breast was anything serious. But the radiologist knew immediately something was wrong. "I was still lying on the exam table, when he told me they were referring me to a surgeon and a MRI since the lump was abnormal," Jen recalls.

Jen was diagnosed with breast cancer and a treatment plan including a lumpectomy, chemotherapy, radiation therapy and another targeted treatment was laid out for her. "Those first two weeks were incredibly tough," Jen admits. "I couldn't be alone. But the hardest part was watching my friends and family cope with the news. Some took it harder than I did."

Like many people going through cancer, Jen had questions and goals. She wanted to stay active and as healthy as possible during her treatment. And she wanted to build a support network beyond her circle of loved ones. Jen did some research and discovered Cancer Coaching at the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation's Maplesoft Centre. "My coach and I worked together to identify what was important to me. She told me about resources at the Centre like the exercise room and nutrition program. The support I found was invaluable to me," she says.

Since then, Jen has met and talked to many people living with cancer or caring for someone with the disease. "I have one friend who lost her mother to pancreatic cancer and another friend who was afraid to tell her children she had cancer. Both could have benefitted from Cancer Coaching," she says.



*Jen Mielke (second from right) and friends*

Then there's the man Jen met while she was having chemotherapy. "It was his first treatment and he was so nervous. He was there all alone and it was his birthday. I thought about how much Cancer Coaching could help him," she says.

Jen completed her treatment in February and started thinking about ways she could help raise awareness for the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation and Cancer Coaching. And then her friend, Jennifer, approached her about doing a film festival to raise funds for the Cancer Foundation. Lights! Camera! CURE!, taking place on October 22nd, will give guests the opportunity to see some of Canada's finest talent on screen while also making a difference in the lives of many people in the Ottawa region who have been impacted by cancer.

"The event supports female filmmakers and a cause that benefits people locally," Jen explains. "It's a way for me to give back for all the wonderful support I received at the Cancer Foundation."



**DATE:** Thursday, October 22, 2015

**TIME:** 6:00 pm reception, 7:00 pm film screening begins

**PLACE:** Algonquin Commons Theatre, 1385 Woodroffe Avenue, Building E

**HOW TO PURCHASE TICKETS:**

<http://www.algonquinsa.ticketfly.com/> or in person at the Algonquin Commons Theatre Box Office



Cancer Coach  
Patti Barrett-  
Robillard

## Coach Notes:

### In her own words, Coach Patti Barrett-Robillard describes the impact Cancer Coaching has on her clients

*The client sitting across from me at the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation's Maplesoft Centre has advanced cancer. He's in a lot of pain which is new for him. Up until recently, he had been feeling well. My client admits he's terrified he's going to have to live with the pain and it will*

*rob him of his quality of life. We talked about options for pain management and put together a list of questions to ask his doctor in order to help them choose the best option for him.*

Soon my client and his wife are back for another consultation. His doctor has prescribed medication and his pain is 100% better. He's once again doing the activities he loves. I can see the relief in his wife's face. "I'm getting my husband back," she says.

This client is one of the hundreds of people I've seen as a Cancer Coach. Each person has been diagnosed with cancer, or is caring for someone who has, but their stories, needs, goals and fears are as unique as they are. My job is to give a client the space to talk about what

cancer means for them and what help they need to address their very personal issues.

Some clients want to work on exercise and nutrition. Others are struggling with anxiety and are looking for help with managing their stress. Many others are looking for a safe place where they can ask questions and discuss their options.

Ours is a holistic approach. We help people do deep breathing and meditation and explore the things they can do to cope with the stress of a cancer diagnosis. We help them find the information they need to make decisions that are right for them. We also support the caregivers so they in turn can continue to support their loved one.

**Every day, my colleagues and I see the difference Cancer Coaching makes in the lives of our clients. It gives them the space to talk about what they need and figure out a way they can move forward and have a better quality of life. And we are so grateful for the generosity of caring friends like you. After all, it's your support for the Cancer Foundation that helps make that happen.**

## Family and Charity: Shaping a Will with Purpose

### Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation to partner with other local charities for a Special Information Session

**Is it time to update your will?** Have you considered the benefits of including a gift to your favourite charity? You might be able to gain significant tax saving but there are still factors to consider.

To help you learn more about the advantages of reshaping your will with purpose, the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation is proud to be partnering with six other local charities to host a special information session on Friday, September 25, 2015. The session will help give you the relevant, accurate information you might need. The partners include The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation, National Arts Centre Foundation, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, United Way of Ottawa, Montfort Hospital Foundation and the Ottawa Food Bank.

Guest speaker Mr. Douglas Buchmayer, Partner, Gowlings

Lafleur Henderson LLP will explain the ins and outs of gifting by will and answer the questions of participants. The session is free and includes complimentary on-site parking and a light lunch. We encourage you to register early, as seating is limited. You can register by calling Marianne Loken at 613-247-3527 ext. 263 or by sending an email to [mloken@ottawacancer.ca](mailto:mloken@ottawacancer.ca).

**Date:** Friday, September 25, 2015  
**Time:** 9:30 am registration  
10:00 am - noon presentation  
**Location:** The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre, 1750 Russell Rd, Ottawa  
*(An equivalent French session will be held at the United Way of Ottawa on October 16.)*