



OPAL Newsletter

Issue 6 Autumn 2016

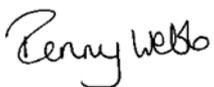
Welcome to the sixth issue of OPAL News. The last 12 months have been very busy for the OPAL team with 900 OPAL questionnaires, more than 2000 MOST questionnaires and 260 blood samples collected. We are now analysing some of the data and have included some preliminary results below.

The next 12 months will be an important period for OPAL. By June it will be more than 12 months since the last woman joined the study. This means we will have all the information we need to start looking at whether lifestyle might influence the severity of the side-effects that women experience during treatment. We particularly want to know if any aspects of lifestyle make it less likely that a woman will need to delay some of her treatment because of severe side-effects. We hope to have some interesting results from this to share with you in our next Newsletter.

The study has now been running for four years and this means we are starting to say goodbye to some of our earliest participants. To those of you who have reached the 4-year point, we are immensely grateful for your contribution to the study and Rebekah and Julianne who have been calling you every three months will miss talking to you. We wish you all the best moving forwards and hope to keep in touch via these newsletters. Please let us know if you no longer want to receive them.

To those who have not yet reached this milestone, we are very grateful for your ongoing commitment. We understand that our questionnaires may sometimes arrive at a difficult time for you or they may be an unwelcome reminder. If this is the case please talk to us about this. I would also like to stress that we don't just want to know about the good times – if we want to know what really matters then we also need to know about the bad times. As always, if you have any questions please feel free to call one of our team on our freecall number 1800 222 600 or email us at opalstudy@qimrberghofer.edu.au.

Best wishes,



Principal Investigator

The Weekend to End Women's Cancers

Queensland's largest walk for women's cancers, was held in October 2015. The 556 participants, including OPAL principal investigator Penny Webb, helped raise **\$1.2 million** for research into women's cancers at QIMR Berghofer.



OPAL: Preliminary results

We have just started analysing data from the **first 640 OPAL participants**. Our preliminary analyses show that women often change their lifestyle after diagnosis. For example:

- ◆ 11% of women reported smoking one year before their diagnosis, but around half of these women stopped smoking around their diagnosis and they remained non-smokers during follow-up.
- ◆ About one third of women reported reducing their level of physical activity after diagnosis.
- ◆ Sedentary (sitting) time increased by an average of about 1 hour per day.
- ◆ Women who did more exercise early during their treatment reported less fatigue at the end of treatment.

WELCOME TO NEW TEAM MEMBER—NINA NA

OPAL is delighted to welcome Dr Nina Na to the team. Nina holds a medical degree from Peking University, Beijing and a PhD from the University of NSW. Nina will be helping to manage all of the information that you have provided to the study. She will also be working with the Medicare data to look at whether different medicines might help prevent ovarian cancer from recurring.



Farewell to Barbara Ranieri and Sharan Burton

We have recently said farewell to Barb who retired at the end of 2015. Barb worked tirelessly behind the scenes for the OPAL study sending out blood kits, consent forms and questionnaires. Barb plans to spend her retirement travelling, learning Italian and studying genealogy.



We are also saying farewell to Sharan who leaves the OPAL team at the end of this month. Many of you would have spoken to Sharan when she has collected information for the 24, 36 and 48 month questionnaires. We wish Sharan all the best for her travels overseas.



CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

Dr. Kate Webber, an oncologist in Sydney presented some early results from the OPAL study at the European Society of Gynaecological Oncology conference in France in October last year. Dr Webber showed that while most women can expect the side-effects of chemotherapy (e.g. fatigue, insomnia, anxiety) to subside within three months of finishing treatment, a small group of women with severe symptoms have a much longer recovery time.

Further work will focus on this group of women to see if we can predict who will have more severe symptoms ahead of time and potentially do something about this.

MOCOG - Long term ovarian cancer survivors study

A group of scientists from around the world (including the OPAL Study) have recently been awarded more than \$2,000,000 to study the characteristics of long term ovarian cancer survivors – particularly those who were initially diagnosed with advanced disease. This will be one of the first times that researchers have looked at women more than 10 years after diagnosis; most studies have looked only at the first 5 years. By identifying what is different about these women, we hope to get some new leads that will help improve outcomes for all women.

Want to know more about medical research at QIMR Berghofer?

Sign up to receive our free newsletter LIFELAB
<http://www.qimrberghofer.edu.au/news-events/lifelab-newsletter/>

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, CONCERNS?

Please call us on our free
OPAL helpline 1800 222 600 or
email opalstudy@qimrberghofer.edu.au