

Chairperson's Annual Report ABCF May 2007 to May 2008

The Action for Breast Cancer Foundation (ABCF) was launched in May 2007. Members of committee at that time Helen Muscat, Esther Sant, Betty Hanley Lee and Phyllis Muscat.

Notary –Dr. Dorotia Galea Medati

Lawyer - Dr. Mattea Farrugia

Accountant - Mr. Henry Attard BA(hons) CPA

Auditor - Brian Tonna and Co CPA

ABCF statute was prepared by Notary Dr. Dorita Galea Medati who registered the Foundation at the Registry on 16th March 2007 Registration 4804/2007

The committee worked on publication of flyers informing the general public about the aims of ABCF. These flyers were printed through sponsorship.

An official launch of the Foundation by means of a press conference took place on May 4th 2007. This was attended by several officials including Hon Minister for Health Dr L. Deguara, Shadow Minister for Health Dr Michael Farrugia, Mrs. Kate Gonzi wife of the Prime Minister and Dr Alfred Sant, Malta Labour Party Leader. Copies of the European Guidelines along with ABCF flyers were presented to each of these officials in the hopes that all concerned with policy and planning related to Health would consider implementing quality assurance into the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer

ABCF bought and distributed copies of the 'European Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis' Apart from above mentioned:- Hon Minister Dolores Christina, Dr F Bartolo, Superintendent SLH, Dr John Cachia, Director Institutional Health, Director of Policy and Planning, Dr Ray Scerri, Dr Chris Barbara |Director Pathology, Dr Peter Fenech Superintendent Boffa Hospital, Dr Stephen Brincat, Director Oncology, Dr Victor Muscat, Oncologist, Mr. Charles Swain, (Breast Clinic) Surgeon, Mr. Caruana Dingli (Breast Clinic) Surgeon, Antoinette Attard on behalf of the Breast Care Nurses, Hon Minister Giovanna Debono, Gozo, Dr. Frank Portelli, Director St Philip's Hospital, Dr Josie Muscat, Director St James Hospital, Dr Anthony Samuel, Director Radiology, Margaret Muscat Director Physiotherapy, Professor Godfrey Laferla Professor of Surgery, Dr. Miriam Dalmas, Cancer Registry Health Information, Violet Camilleri, Nursing Boffa Hospital, Theresa Naudi, The Malta Hospice Movement.(Novartis reimbursed ABCF for these books at a later date).

Ira Losco was approached and asked if she would be kind enough to act as Ambassador for ABCF. She accepted and has attended several of our press conferences. She has also helped to publicize breast awareness during one of her big music events.

The committee then went on to follow through on preliminary discussions about provision of a biopsy gun for the breast clinic at St Luke's Hospital. Following meetings with Dr John Cachia Director Health Institutions, it was agreed that ABCF would

purchase the biopsy gun and enough disposables to last for a year. Novartis Drug Company sponsored the purchase of this gun and it was officially presented to the Breast Clinic on 2nd April. Novartis also part sponsored our educational flyers.

ABCF set up a course for Health Care Professionals entitled 'Breast Awareness', this course was hosted by St Philip's Hospital from February to April 07, one session weekly. Each participant gave a donation prior to attending the course. Certificates of attendance were issued. All speakers were senior professionals working in the area of breast cancer care. All speakers gave their time on a voluntary basis.

Michaela Muscat Journalist and University student joined our team to help with Public Relations.

ABCF organized a fundraising event on June 9th 2007, in the form of an open day at Professional Health and Beauty Services Ltd. Mosta. Several different treatments were offered against donations to the Foundation. Breast care nurses were presents from St Luke's Hospital to council any women who needed help or information. The event was a great success.

Work began on the website which was launched by Mrs. Kate Gonzi at the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Unit with a press conference on 10th October. The website gives information about the ABCF and also guides women on self examination. There is access to a psychologist and other information regarding activities. The site also has a petition for the improvement of services for women needing diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.

A Breast Awareness Course for Beauty Therapists was held at PHBS Ltd. Mosta on 3rd September 2007. Fifteen participants attended and a certificate of attendance was also presented.

Benna Chase Clinical Psychologist who works at Boffa Hospital was approached and asked if she would be kind enough to let us put her details on the website so that anyone needing psychological help would be able to find it. Benna accepted. She also gave a teaching session on sexuality during the January 08 Breast Awareness Course.

T-shirts were printed for breast awareness month with the logo of ABCF and the website details. Activity Paint Valletta Pink took place in Valletta on 20th October 2007. Soroptimists International supported this cause with their attendance as well as Breast Care Support Group Europa Donna. The Malta Breast Feeding Foundation was also represented. The stand we set up provided cakes with pink bows, water, bios with ABCF website printed on them, pink ribbons made by Soroptimists International members. The stand acted as a base from where the public could sign the petition. Members of the public joined in with a symbolic walk which went from City Gate to Pjazza Regina.

On 28th October following a sponsored walk of 36kms from Ċirkewwa to Marsaxlokk organized by Mr. Charlie Cardona and friends. He presented a cheque for Euros 3619.35 to ABCF during a social event at Beachaven Xemxija.

During the month of October members of ABCF committee took part in various TV and Radio programmes to create breast awareness and also to explain the function of the Foundation.

On November 8th the first of a series of talks organized in collaboration with the Breast Care Nurses from St Luke's Hospital/ now Mater Dei Hospital began. The first of the 'Road shows' was held at Siggiewi. The Road shows are intended to reach the general public and give them vital information in relation to breast awareness. Monthly talks were arranged with chosen localities. Other areas covered include Qawra, Mosta, Mellieha and Gozo.

On 20th November Soroptomists International presented ABCF with a donation of euro 764.00 requesting that these funds be used towards educational activities.

On the initiative of Novartis, ABCF also gave a talk on breast awareness to family members and female employees of Novartis. This was well attended and greatly appreciated

A meeting was held at Mater Dei Hospital with Mr Gordon Caruana Dingli once he had been officially recognized as Consultant Breast Surgeon. During the meeting ideas in ways ABCF could offer help were discussed. Mr. Caruana Dingli asked for our help in various things including personalized files for women attending the clinic. The possible purchase of a camera and the assurance that ABCF would be included in the working group that Mr. Caruana Dingli was hoping to set up. ABCF are awaiting feedback regarding this matter.

The ABCF linked with those involved in setting up the Malta Health Network, attending the first founding meeting when MHN was formally established with mutual agreement of all present and signing of their Statute. ABCF is now a subscribed member of the MHN.

The first ABCF newsletter was launched in January/February. This has been distributed to various localities, clinics, hair and beauty salons, pharmacies and hospitals. This initiative was sponsored by Cherubino. Preparations for the next newsletter commenced soon after first issue was distributed.

Cherubino also provided sponsorship through ABCF for one of the Breast Care Nurses from St. Luke's Hospital/MDH to attend a conference on Breast Cancer. This conference had sessions with direct reference to the European Guidelines on Breast Cancer care. The conference took place November 2007 and was held in Amsterdam.

From January to March 2008 a Breast Awareness Course for Health Care Professionals was held following the same system as mentioned previously. St Philip's kindly hosted this course.

ABCF requested help related to academic accreditation for the course from Theresa Bugeja, Tutor Institute of Health Care. Theresa is currently following up this issue. It is hoped that she will also become actively involved in helping with the next awareness course.

More recruits to the ABCF include Caryl Cassar (Secretary to Dean of Medical School) who is keeping the website up to date,

Francesca Vella, journalist, took over from Micela Muscat in relation to handling PR. Michaela helped us a great deal but studying has meant that she was unable to continue.

Meetings were held with organizations throughout 2007/8 including the following:- The Breast Care Support Group ED, The Malta Breast Feeding Foundation, Mr. Gordon Caruana Dingli Breast Surgeon, Soroptiomists International committee, several Pharmaceutical companies who offered us information regarding drugs related to breast cancer and sponsorship for various activities. Nestle, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Unit, Institute of Health Care, Mrs. Benna Chase Psychologist Boffa Hospital. **Volserv** – following a meeting it was decided that Helen and Esther would both attend the volunteer training course at Mater Dei Hospital. This has proved valuable in relation to establishing a working relationship with members of hospital staff.

The ABCF was approached by 5 women currently receiving Herceptin treatment asking ABCF if we would lobby for this drug to be given free and asking if there was any chance of offering them some financial help. ABCF is liaising with Dr. Stephen Brincat about this matter. ABCF also wants to ensure the Community Chest Fund will continue to offer the same support it has showed in the past, up until such time as the drug becomes freely available.

Since the press conference for the launch of the website where the issue of obtaining Herceptin free was broached, ABCF has along with the general public been informed this drug is set to be given free in the future.

On the initiative of Rennie Vella (TV presenter) ABCF will be holding the activity 'Imxi Maghna' on June 22nd from 10.00am to 12.00noon. In relation to this upcoming event ABCF held a press conference 5th June with the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Health Dr Joseph Cassar as well as Mr. Rennie Vella.

Membership

Just over 100 people have enrolled as members of ABCF, those who enrolled gave a donation or attended one of our events. All members are sent a copy of the Newsletter.

Brief outline of the role of committee members.

Although Esther Sant and Helen Muscat were the founders of ABCF, they were very quickly given great support by Phyllis Muscat who allowed her business property to be utilized for various ABCF functions including press conferences, meetings and the

fundraising Open Day, where all the products used were donated by Phyllis. Phyllis also uses her business contacts to help us out with various projects. This includes links with the media along with commercial businesses. PHBS were largely responsible for the preparation of the first newsletter. Phyllis became a committee member at our first meeting with her to discuss holding a seminar for beauty therapists, Phyllis's motivation and enthusiasm helped us to progress rapidly.

Initially Esther worked on the European Guidelines, arranging the purchase and distribution of these important documents.

Following her volunteer training, Esther is actively involved with giving a regular day of help as volunteer at Mater Dei. Esther deals with a large number of contact persons in relation to sponsorships for events. She also offers support and advice to women who contact the ABCF. Esther and Helen take joint care of finances, linking with the rest of committee and the ABCF accountant.

Helen is the ABCF link with Pharmaceutical companies and holds meetings with those involved with breast cancer drugs on a regular basis.

Betty works with women diagnosed and treated for breast cancer at St Philip's hospital. She has been trained in fitting women with the correct prosthesis and has introduced a better quality prosthesis, bra's and swims wear to Malta. St Philip's offers a breast care information service free of charge. Betty takes part in many television programmes one of ABCF's first media events came through one of her TV slots. She continues to publicize ABCF aims achievements and events through her various TV/ radio slots. Betty gives a teaching session in relation to prosthesis and her experience along with Esther and Helen as part of the awareness course. Helen contacts all the speakers and creates the programme for the Awareness Course. Esther deals with all applications for the courses, taking care of donations and the attendance register.

Success in these areas is due to a truly professional commitment from all concerned.

Conclusion

During the first full year of activity ABCF has offered a great deal of help and support to those in need. It is hoped that the professional way in which it has functioned will give continued credibility in the eyes of the General Public and all Official bodies.

So many people have helped the Foundation it is impossible to mention them all, (major contributors are all recorded in this report). On behalf of ABCF I wish to thank everyone.

Notary Dr. D. Medati, Lawyer Dr M. Farrugia, Accountant Mr H Attard and Auditors Brian Tonna and Co. have all given their services free of charge. ABCF are most grateful for their professional contribution.

I also wish to say a special thank the committee members, RobertalBugeja from PHBS.

ABCF look forward to another very active year, with a great team spirit we are moving forward.

Helen Muscat
Chairperson ABCF

4th June 2008