



Peer-to-peer support for
women living with advanced
or metastatic breast cancer

Peer-to-Peer Support Network Launched for Women Living with Advanced/Metastatic Breast Cancer

Free Europa Donna Ireland Event to visit Midlands, Midwest and Southwest

11 July 2016: The launch of 'Connect MBC Network' – a new peer-to-peer community for women with advanced or metastatic breast cancer (MBC) – will take place at locations in the midlands, midwest and southwest between Friday 22 July and Saturday 23 July.

The free event, which is hosted by Europa Donna Ireland with the support of Pfizer Healthcare, is open to those with advanced/metastatic breast cancer and to members of their family and friends. The meetings will take place in Moneygall, Limerick and Tralee (full details below). *Please note that spaces for all events are limited and registration is required, either by emailing info@europadonnaireland.ie or phoning (01) 496 0198.*

Part of Europa Donna – The European Breast Cancer Coalition, which boasts 47 member states, Europa Donna Ireland is a volunteer-run patient advocacy group working for better breast cancer services throughout Ireland.

Widespread Misconceptions

According to Tara Byrne of Europa Donna Ireland, MBC is increasingly being seen by the medical profession as a chronic disease. "As many as 1,500 to 2,000 people in Ireland are living with metastatic breast cancer at any one time. But, despite these figures, there continues to be widespread misconceptions and misunderstandings about the disease.

"The experiences and the knowledge of those living with this incurable disease are rarely spoken about. This is a situation that compounds the sense of isolation and hopelessness felt by many. 'Connect MBC Network' builds a safe online community where people with advanced/metastatic breast cancer can connect with each other to find support, share experiences and learn more about their disease."

According to recent research by Pfizer Healthcare and the European School of Oncology, the lack of support for those with advanced/ metastatic breast cancer is not unique to Ireland but, according to Ms. Byrne, it is a situation that is troubling.

Evelyn Forde Wakefield, a young woman from Offaly who was diagnosed with advanced/metastatic breast cancer two years ago, agrees. "I have spent the 23 months since diagnosis searching for good support and proper clear information on MBC. I have traveled as far as Boston to get some help," she says.

According to the National Cancer Registry in Ireland there are approximately 2,800 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed per year. Despite considerable advances in the treatment of breast cancer, approximately 30% of those initially diagnosed with early stage breast cancer will eventually develop recurrent advanced or metastatic disease. Medical science doesn't currently know the exact mechanism through which breast cancer cells migrate to other organs in the body.

Receiving a diagnosis is devastating

"Receiving a diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer is devastating, both for the individual and for their loved ones. It can leave you with an overwhelming sense of sadness and loss. You grieve for all the things that you think cancer has taken from you. Your hopes for the future are destroyed," says Rhona Nally, who was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2004.

"I think that there's often a tendency for those with an advanced/ metastatic diagnosis to withdraw from others. They don't want to frighten other breast cancer survivors with their diagnosis and with the realities of living with an incurable cancer. It may seem ridiculous, but there's also often a real sense of failure, of having let people down by not 'beating' breast cancer.

"For those with metastatic breast cancer, there is a real need for a specific support network where they can find the support they need, share their experiences and learn more about advanced/ metastatic breast cancer."

To find out more about the 'Connect MBC Network' and to secure your place at the free event, please visit www.europadonnaireland.ie, email: info@europadonnaireland.ie or ring (01) 496 0198.

Event details:

- Midlands – Barack Obama Plaza, Moneygall, Co. Offaly, Friday 22nd July, 10am – 12pm
- Midwest – The Hunt Museum, Limerick, Friday 22nd July, 3pm – 5pm
- Southwest – Il Forno Restaurant, Tralee, Saturday 23rd July, 10am – 12pm

ENDS

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Notes to Editor:

Please visit www.europadonnaireland.ie for further information on Europa Donna Ireland. The recent report (*Global Status of Metastatic Breast Cancer (mBC): A 2005 – 2015 Decade Report*) developed by Pfizer Oncology and the European School of Oncology (ESO) is available at www.breastcancervision.com.

