

Mother's Day



On Mother's Day 2019 we recognise the Mothers and Daughters who face a breast cancer diagnosis together. Janet and Julie Kesby have both been diagnosed twice and have supported each other all the way. Both are well at the moment and say their bond was always good; now it's unbreakable. They shared their stories with Specialised Therapeutics in May 2019.

Janet's Story:

"I am 78 years old. I have four children and I am retired. I was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 1991, when I had a right breast mastectomy. I did not need chemo because they caught it early, thank goodness. But then, in 1998 I was diagnosed again. This time it was in my left breast. Doctors told me the multiple

cancer tumours were not even related to my first experience and that these episodes were entirely different. So, I then had a left breast mastectomy. I was fit and healthy before both diagnoses, so I was in shock. Again, I did not have chemotherapy. I trusted the doctors who told me they had caught it early for a second time, but I took Tamoxifen as a preventative medication for a number of years. Both times I faced breast cancer, my daughter Julie was a great support. She even took long service leave and holidays to help me and my husband on our farm. I will never forget it. On the second diagnosis she again took leave and travelled from Canberra to Millbank (near Kempsey) to care for me.

I was devastated when Julie was diagnosed in 2009 because I knew exactly what she was feeling. But I also knew you could get through it - because I had. This time it was my turn to help. I travelled to Canberra to be with Julie, and her sister Alison.

When Julie was diagnosed for a second time (in 2014), her sister was her main support because I was at home supporting my husband on the farm.

Our bond is strong and we are the best of friends. Coping with cancer has probably made us closer. We have a common interest in dragon boat racing and we really understand the process of coping with cancer. We think we are both okay for now.

There have been silver linings from this whole experience. I was a migraine sufferer and I have not had one since 1991. Maybe it was the hormones?

I received wonderful support from family and friends, and also from sporting friends each time I was diagnosed.

I faced another cancer battle in 2007 when I was diagnosed with rectal cancer. This involved major surgery and chemotherapy, but I have come through everything again.

Julie has always been a great support. We are similar in that we both have faith and we believe in prayer. We encourage each other to be positive and each time we have been diagnosed, we have worked really hard to get back on track and return to normal activities.

How would I describe the mother daughter bond? Unbreakable. We have been

there in good times and bad. As a mother, I am grateful to her for all she has done for me. And I hope she has always been able to rely on me.”

Julie's Story:

“I am 55 years old and am retired at present, but I am looking to work again. I was a Research Officer for 29 years at the University of New South Wales in Canberra, before being made redundant in 2016.

My first diagnosis was in 2009 when doctors found abnormal cells inside one of the milk ducts in my right breast. I then undertook two wide incisions before a mastectomy in January 2010. Then I was diagnosed again in 2014. It was April Fool's Day when the GP confirmed the results that I had two tumours in my left breast. I could not believe it was back, and undertook the mastectomy of my left breast and removal of lymph nodes. No chemo was required. I have just finished the five years of Tamoxifen post-surgery.

I was in shock at the first diagnosis, but looking back, I had been fatigued. I put this down to work and life but there was obviously something else going on. I could not believe it when I was diagnosed again when I was very fit and back to life in full swing.

I got through both times by keeping myself really fit, dragon boat racing and playing tennis.

I did have great support from family and friends each time. And I had confidence in the medical teams and in my wider support network.

My Mum was a great example of determination. Her drive to recover from her breast cancer inspired me. She gave me great strength to get through everything and understand the steps to recovery.

How would I sum her up? My Mum is inspirational! Having said that, my Dad, sisters and brother and families have also given me great support and great love

along the way. Dad has been a great carer to Mum and a very special support to us both. Mum, Dad, Alison and I have celebrated together milestones through some special family overseas trips to Canada, USA and UK. More recently Mum and my sister Alison travelled to Italy and Switzerland.

Mum and I do have a special understanding of each other because of what we have gone through. Our common interest in dragon boat racing (through Flamin' Dragons, Aussie Dragonflies and Dragons Abreast Canberra teams) and tennis has also strengthened this bond.

We are close, tight and true friends, as well as Mother and Daughter. Mum understands me when I'm celebrating and consoles me when I am down.

We are both well at the moment. I am determined to stay fit and healthy and to keep travelling. I also want to continue my volunteer work and mentoring of others.

Mother's Day has always been a celebration of our Mum and past Grandmas. This year will be no different."

*May 2019.