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Automated Transcription – Episode 1 Season 3 – Standout Moments

A diagnosis of breast cancer can cause a life-changing ripple effect of impact affecting those we love the most and those upon whom we lean for comfort and strength in the most challenging of times. My name is Ashton Hurley and I'm the CEO of Breast Cancer Ireland. And you are listening to More Than A Lump, a podcast that talks openly and honestly to a selection of guests about their very personal connections to breast cancer, be it through their career choice, their own firsthand experience of the disease, or through sharing the experience of close family members. Over the past two seasons, my conversations have centered on how breast cancer has informed perspectives on life, love, family health, goals and aspirations. As we begin a new season and indeed a new year, I thought it might be a good idea to reflect on some of the moments over the past 20 episodes that stopped me in my tracks moments that reminded us that for so many impacted breast cancer is more than a lump.

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Sorcha was just 22 years of age when following a routine visit to her GP to get a prescription for the pill. She was diagnosed with an aggressive breast cancer that had spread to her lymph nodes. She admits she wasn't breast wear and thought the small lump on her left breast, which is about the size of a pea, was almost not worthy of a mention. Fortunately for Sorcha, she did bring it to the doctor's attention, who sent her on for a referral to St. James' Hospital. Sorcha's story was a salient reminder to make time to check one of our key messages in breast cancer Ireland.

Speaker 2 ([02:00](#)):

I'm really sorry, I'm diagnosing you with aggressive form of breast cancer. And I laughed and I said, you're joking. And he goes, I'm not. And I remember I just was like, what? I remember looking at my mom and my mom's eyes were full of tears and I was just like, what? I like, I just couldn't comprehend it. Like, and then he said a few more things, but like, I don't remember anything. I remember though leaving there and going into the toilet in James' and like literally like leaning myself against the door and just like falling down crying. Cause I was like, what is going on? Like, like yesterday I was a normal 22 year old living in Dublin, working in Dublin, going out with my friends. And now today it's like everything is different. I

Speaker 1 ([02:39](#)):

Met Emma Cassidy when she was going through her initial treatment several years ago following her triple negative diagnosis. But even back then, and despite her worry about the future, she was determined to educate and inform other women and became the face of our education and outreach program with Corn Market Group financial services. How fortunate are the students she teaches and how, how lucky baby Sam is to have her as his mom. Emma never even thought a child was on the cards for her, but as she explains in this clip, life is a way of surprising us.

Speaker 3 ([03:09](#)):

And then as he said, um, Sam came along. But you know, um, to get to that point, you know, we did have to have some really tough conversations and quite early on in the relationship I did have to say to him,

you know, I have this gene. You know, this means I'm gonna have to get particular type of surgery. Um, and it's probably going to be sooth sooner rather than later because, you know, as I said, of higher risk of another cancer. Um, so, you know, there is a chance that, you know, a family and children won't be on the cards for us. Um, and I know like saying that to somebody, you know, that could make somebody run for the hills, you know, well, you know, that's, that wouldn't interest some people. Um, but he was just, I couldn't have asked for a lovelier response.

(03:52):

He just was like, I don't, I don't, that doesn't matter to me. You know, I'm in this relationship with you. If we have children, great. If we don't, you know, we can still have a lovely life. Just the two of us, you know, we're happy just the two of us. And I think that's, you know, the point when I knew that, you know, we were going to stay together and you know, this, he was just brought into my life at just the perfect time. And like even talking about it makes me feel really emotional because, you know, if I said all this, when I say this to him, he just kind of laughs it off. I don't think he fully realizes that, you know, he really just helps turn my life completely around in terms of just like lifted me up when I needed it. And, um, yeah. And then thankfully Sam was our little bit mi our little miracle just before Christmas in 2020. And yeah, I just never thought that this would be the life that I'd get just so grateful every single day for it. Cause I know not everybody gets to have it. Mm.

Speaker 1 (04:47):

Here at Breast Cancer Ireland, we're a very inclusive charity and absolutely recognize that breast cancer impacts everyone in the family, not just women. Sadly, one in nine women will be diagnosed in their lifetime. And although the instance from men is much rarer, it can happen. In these next two clips we hear from partners and the fact that for them breast cancer is definitely more than a lump. We also hear from a male breast cancer survivor. Jamie Crawford is married to Georgie and Steve to Tanya. Both women were diagnosed with breast cancer and the boys have traveled with their wives along their path to recovery.

Speaker 4 (05:23):

Thanks for giving us this space to talk from a partner's point of view. I remember, you know, as we were going through it with Georgie, it was probably three or four months in before anyone actually turned around to me and said, how are you doing? Yeah. And when they actually did, that's when I sort of broke down a little bit mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because that was my first opportunity to really express myself and tell people how I was feeling. Cuz I had to be strong for Georgie

Speaker 5 (05:48):

And I think that first phase is definitely the most difficult, you know? Um, definitely like for us, once you've got through that phase, which is horrendous, we didn't know how to deal with it. We didn't expect it. We had enough to deal with already. So you sit at home thinking like how many more things can happen. Uh, our kids were, uh, older, so, um, they're now kind of nine, uh, 12 and 14. So a year ago, uh, just, just a little bit younger, but, but still old enough that you have to worry about them, take care of them, get them to school. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. It's a busy house, busy lifestyle. Um, so we sat there just scratching our heads, wondering what to do. And, and you kind of wonder how it happened. It's something you expect doesn't, isn't gonna happen to you.

Speaker 1 (06:30):

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Dara McDonough joined us back in season one and told a powerful story from a male breast cancer patient perspective, finding himself in the unfamiliar surroundings of the waiting room of the breast care center, feeling like something of an outsider amongst the women around him. Now a longtime supporter of the work we do in breast cancer Ireland, he's helping us to raise the profile of the disease amongst the male population at large. As many people still don't realize, this disease can affect anyone of any age, not just females.

Speaker 6 ([06:58](#)):

I was very confused about what was happening and how, how can I have breast cancer. And, uh, but when I had the mammogram, sorry, when I had the mastectomy, I had to go back every week for about five or six weeks because when the, you have the mastectomy, there's a pocket left where they take the breast tissue out and this pocket fills up with, with fluid. So every Friday and, and it fills up with fluid and you end up with a, a small boob. So every Friday I had to go back in to get it drained and into Morris Stokes office. And it's then that I was sitting in the waiting and, uh, I knew why I was there. And I knew was, then I realized this is everybody in here is breast cancer, you know? And then I noticed that, uh, people wouldn't sit beside me. People wouldn't, they wouldn't look at me. Uh, a lot of them, uh, what sort of turn away from me. Now I, I know now why? As in, uh, they must have been absolutely terrified for themselves. And then wondering, why doesn't that man wait in the car for his partner? Because I'm sure the vast majority of them like me, men in breast cancer, it doesn't happen.

Speaker 1 ([08:27](#)):

It's hard to believe. We have recorded 20 episodes since our first one aired back last March with our chairman Professor Arnie Hill. I smile when I think of inviting him to take part. He had never recorded a podcast before, but he quickly got into his stride, sharing his own career highlights and his delight in the opening of the new breast building at Beaumont Hospital. This opening was a highlight for everyone last year. Breast Cancer Ireland is privileged to be a significant donor to the center as a result of your help and the help of so many over the years. The new 6 million facility is a one-stop location for over 10,000 women and indeed men annually with five imaging suites, the latest imaging and ultrasound equipment, as well as eight examination and consultation rooms and the latest clinical trial unit on the top floor. We can confidently say that this center will offer bench to bedside care for patients into the future where the latest developments in clinical trial will become part of the personalized treatment plans for those diagnosed.

Speaker 7 ([09:24](#)):

Well, the design of it is imaging on the first floor, clinical exam on the second floor and on the third floor clinical trials unit. All integrated breast care, nurses, administration, the whole thing in one journey. It's also a fantastic facility. We focused on luxury cuz I think, uh, I learned this actually way back in America where I saw in Memorial Sloan Kettering, uh, at that time Evelyn Lauder or as came and actually just made the outpatient facilities beautiful. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. She just put in the best furniture, the best decor. And that's what we've done in Beaumont. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we're 20 years behind mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But we've made a really nice facility cuz I think a woman who comes in with a lump on their breast, that journey shouldn't be in a cold clinical facility of a hospital, shouldn't terrify them. It should be like walking into our living room. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And it should be nice and a nice environment.

Speaker 1 ([10:15](#)):

Many of you have told us that you found the episode with plastic surgeon, Mr. Jamie Martin Smith. Very compelling. I recommend you have a listen if you're facing into this phase of your treatment. Sotu was the episode with consultant radiologist Dr. Deju. It really brought home to me the power we have ourselves and how when we know our own bodies, we can spot changes. That can be the difference in identifying the signs.

Speaker 8 ([10:38](#)):

The most important thing is breast self-awareness. Um, what we would say to every woman is that they should examine their own breasts once a month. Not every day, not every week, just once a month after their period. Because at that point a lot of those hormonal changes have died on. And, um, they will lose the change. And if they get used to what's normal for them, they will be able to pick up the change. Mm-hmm.

Speaker 1 ([11:07](#)):

<affirmative>, the psychological impact of breast cancer diagnosis was a theme that came up several times throughout the past two seasons. And to be honest, one we will return to in season three, mother of two from Carine County Cork. Madeline McColl first discovered a lump on her right breast in the shower and was diagnosed with a great three tumor. Three weeks later she was joined in the third episode of season two by Amanda McCain, a counselor with Purple House, a community-based cancer support center in Bray County, Wicklow, to talk about this topic,

Speaker 9 ([11:36](#)):

The things then that helped me. So like Amanda said, like for, for me, some of the more difficult were that that mindset kind of piece and, and the worry about each stage at each stage of treatment or what effect is this gonna have and the waiting around. So the waiting between my diagnosis and my surgery and my waiting to see if I need chemotherapy or not, and then the chemotherapy and what are the side effects gonna be, like, how that is gonna be, or, um, hormone treatment, then what effect is that gonna have on me? And, and what I was most afraid of was the effects that were gonna change my mood. Okay. Um, so, you know, the physical ones are easier still. What I think it was more, um, what effect I was gonna have in my mood. But, but I found with each stage the worrying was nearly worse than when it, when I, it actually happened.

([12:17](#)):

And I, it was fine generally. Yeah. Um, so the things that definitely helped me, um, well I had a great support network around, so, um, obviously my, uh, immediate family, um, Adrian, my husband was brilliant and he would've taken the kids, um, up to his, um, family for kind of weekends and my mom would've come, come and stayed with me on kind of my slow weekend. Yeah. So I kind of got to know my kind of passion enough when I was kind of going to be kind of slowest and, and sluggish after chemo. Um, so that was brilliant. Amazing friends and family. So I felt connection, um, definitely helped and, and connecting. So I, I started a blog. Um, so, um, beauty and the Cancer Beast Do I, and it was to kind of share my story and it was really trying to, it was the hopes of trying to help somebody else in some way. So trying to give bits of information, any hints and tips that I learned along the way just as I was modeling through it.

Speaker 1 ([13:09](#)):

One of our great friends and longtime supporters, Paula McLean, also shared an honest reflection on the emotional scars that remain with her to this day over 11 years later. But in a lovely recollection, she also shared a story of her daughter Maggie, asking her to take off her wig and show all her friends at the school gate, her bald head, bald and proud Paula.

Speaker 10 ([13:29](#)):

Kids are extremely resilient. They, I don't think they noticed half the time except with me there, there was a couple of jokes. My daughter, one of the days outside school, you know, my middle daughter Maggie, was telling her friends that her mom had no hair and thought that was just so cool. <laugh>. And then asked me outside the school to take my wig off and show all her friends. And I said, look, I'll do that later. You know, <laugh>. Um, so kids were, they were incredible. And I, but it was actually an interesting part of this story cause the kids have grown up and that they know that I've been very involved in, in, in breast cancer and in in breast cancer research and, and they know that I've fundraising and so they see this part of it. But we were going to the, to school a couple of years ago and there was a sign for something, can't remember particularly what it was.

([14:10](#)):

And my eldest at the time, the car would've been quite young, still the early teenager, she just said, um, mom, I didn't actually know that people, um, can actually die from breast cancer. And so that was a whole different conversation mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And, uh, that was, uh, it was incredible actually know I was becoming a, she's an older child now, becoming an, uh, an older teenager to actually want to understand it and to not have a fear around talking about it. And I think that's a very powerful thing for teenagers and up and coming young 20 year olds to actually understand their bodies and to be empowered and to be actually completely aware of not finding something but of anything that is different or change or

Speaker 1 ([14:53](#)):

Changes. Paula's three little girls are now teenagers and she's passionate about continued investment into breast cancer research. She wants to protect girls like her daughters and indeed future generations of Irish women to make sure they survive and thrive despite what life throws at them. Thanks Paula, for all that you do. In the past year, breast Cancer Ireland has raised over 3.1 million, with 2 million going to support our ongoing research programs into metastatic disease prevention, a new HER two plus clinical trial, and also support for our fellowship award into triple-negative breast cancer being undertaken at Queens University Belfast. These programs coupled with the continuing investment and expansion of our national Biobank of patient profiles and samples is helping us to change the dial positively on this disease into the future. Furthermore, our education and awareness program has been going from strength to strength following our appointment of an additional dedicated outreach coordinator through the sponsorship from U P M C Hillman Center to support our efforts of delivering the free breast health programs across companies, community groups, and sporting associations.

([15:57](#)):

Now with six coordinators covering all regions of Ireland, they have met with over 25,000 people in the past 12 months. And we are seeing that awareness does definitely save lives during the summer. With the threat of Covid in the rear view mirror. We hosted our first physical event, our Touch of Pink Summer Lunch in the Intercontinental Hotel, where we got the opportunity to thank our many ambassadors,

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patient supporters, our donors and others for their ongoing support. It was such a great day reconnecting with so many. Our firecracker ambassador, the wonderful Ann Ebel joined us for that lunch and we convinced her to come in to record a podcast. Anne was 48 years old when she was diagnosed with breast cancer for the first time in 2003. She joined us along with Carol Mallon, who was diagnosed in 2004. And Marian Eagan who is living with a metastatic diagnosis.

(16:45):

Like all our episodes, our guests have dealt with their diagnosis differently. They have had different side effects and challenges associated with their treatment, but importantly, they have found ways to live their very best lives with their families and their friends despite the trauma of what life has thrown at them. I enjoyed this episode very much and it was heartening to hear how that initial investment by breast cancer Ireland and a paddle boat for the Lorelle paddlers has helped so many to get out on the water and live their best lives this year. With restrictions lifted and the environment more open to physical events. We hosted our first ever hybrid great pink run event where we held a physical event in Leopardstown in Dublin on October the ninth. And then in McKenney Castle Park on October 16th, participants could attend either of these, or for those unable to attend in person, they could opt to do their 5K or 10 K distance within their own local community. Over 8,000 men, women and children took part running, jogging, walking as part of our ping tribe across the week and raised over 575,000 euro for breast cancer research. Denise Ash joined us along with nutritionist Ora Walsh, to talk about how best to prepare.

Speaker 11 (17:54):

So I'd encourage people to pull back on the fiber, especially in the morning before the run. So often people would be like, I had a bowl of Mosley and added extra nuts and seeds and loads of fruits and you're guaranteed to have the SCORs. I can do that <laugh>. So what I'd encourage people to do is pull back in the nuts and seeds, pull back in the fruit and veg in the morning of the run, keep a plane, keep it simple and you know, quick release carbohydrates. In other words, process carbohydrates are probably the best thing to have that morning. Okay. So hydration and carbohydrates focus on those two things and you're going to not only run well, but when we run well, we enjoy it a little bit more. Yeah. So that's important. So if someone is walking it or um, running it at, and if it's five or 10 K, it doesn't matter. We all want to enjoy it as much as possible. Yeah, definitely. And we do that if we're well hydrated and we've eaten enough carbohydrate.

Speaker 1 (18:46):

I know I haven't covered all 20 episodes, but hopefully this gives you a good flavor. It was such a great experience for me to host this series with so many interesting guests. However, I can't close out this recap without a clip from my favorite episode. The one where we focus on the future, the impacts and the advancements being made consistent and intensive. Breast cancer research is vital in changing the landscape of this disease. And the reason I continue to do what I do, professor Leon Young Scientific Director, Beaumont or CSI Cancer Center and chair of the conference, updated from there. And I have to say I went away filled with hope for the future. I will close with her words and wish all of our more than a lump listeners a very happy New Year. Thank you for listening. On

Speaker 12 (19:29):

A personal note, I would just like to say huge thanks to Breast Cancer Ireland, cuz I know that our lab wouldn't exist without you guys. And also we wouldn't understand the patients as well as we do without

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your lovely breast cancer ambassadors, without your understanding. Um, and I really, I I think that we've had a great journey together Hmm. O over such a long

Speaker 1 ([19:47](#)):

Time. And, and it's very true. I mean, the amount of people who initially I was a bit nervous to bring sort of, if I call them, lay people into a research environment like a lab and have somebody walk them through, you know, what you do on a daily basis. Because I kind of thought that might be just over my head, let alone their heads. But it actually sh proved to be the complete opposite. They were fascinated by how you showed them under microscope, et cetera. Various different, you know, uh, research that you're working on and your lab team are, were so accommodating. And I remember one guy saying to a family that we brought through, you know, it's amazing now I can put a face to the name, to the cell that I'm looking underneath the microscope, but that I know this is ultimately going to help your Yeah. You know, person in your family or whatever. And I think that's really powerful.

Speaker 12 ([20:34](#)):

Oh hundred 10%. The, the communication goes both ways. And I think the passion and the interest goes both ways. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so thank you.

Speaker 1 ([20:42](#)):

The information in this podcast is based on the personal stories of those we have chatted to. If you are concerned in any way, please contact your GP immediately, or you can contact us@breastcancerireland.com.