Hello and Welcome from Eileen

For me, joining Lifehouse is an opportunity to be involved in something I believe in and feel very strongly about: improving the delivery of cancer care and placing the patient at the centre of the care model.

This is the central ethos of the Lifehouse vision. It’s what made the opportunity to join Lifehouse irresistible to me, although this meant a big change for my family and a move from Melbourne to Sydney.

The Lifehouse mission appealed to my soul. We are in a unique and extraordinarily fortunate position in that we have the resources to commit to improving the way that cancer is treated in Australia, to change it for the better. And your continued support is central to us leading that change.

Your involvement and commitment keeps us looking forward, affirming our position in the international vanguard of healthcare and research.

Our next six months will be devoted to making the Lifehouse vision a reality and ensuring our patients experience that vision in full. I’ll be focusing on refining the processes that we need in place to be well prepared for our stage 2 launch when in-patients become a part of our story.

I want to thank you for your support of Lifehouse – it has empowered us to make a difference in the lives of our patients, their families and carers. As I take the helm of the organisation I look forward to working in partnership with you our supporters, as well as our staff and volunteers to engineer a future without cancer.

Specsavers Community Program has partnered with Chris O’Brien Lifehouse

The initiative was designed to thank the communities that support Specsavers and all customers can take part. For each frame purchased, customers receive a special token which they can drop into a donation box in-store, selecting their preferred charity. Specsavers then make a donation on their customers’ behalf and to date have raised more than $15,000 for Lifehouse.
The Mostyn family wanted to support charities with a bold vision and established a family governed Private Ancillary Fund (PAF).

Cousins Cameron, Tom, Lauren and Lily from Sydney decided to contribute $20,000 towards the Lifehouse LivingRoom, helping fund complementary therapies and supportive services for patients undergoing treatment for cancer.

A wide range of evidence-based complementary therapies has been shown to help patients relieve stress, decrease pain and anxiety, and reduce side effects of treatment. These include modalities as diverse as acupuncture, massage and art therapy; to counselling, healthy cooking classes and exercise physiology.

The Lifehouse LivingRoom was designed to offer the best possible support to patients by including integrative medicine as part of the overall package of cancer care, overseen by practitioners with specific experience in treating those diagnosed with cancer. Located on the ground floor of the facility, the LivingRoom is beautifully finished to provide a sanctuary for patients, as well as their families and carers.

Featuring organic textures, neutral tones and tactile finishes, it offers a warm, nurturing, non-clinical environment.

Cancer has had a significant impact on the Mostyn family and Cameron says it was definitely front-of-mind when they first started thinking about how to approach the charitable giving space.

“The LivingRoom model had an immediate resonance with our family, with the holistic approach clearly going beyond the traditional medical approach to treatment. It’s something I could definitely have seen cancer patients in our family embracing.”

The Mostyn family’s contribution to Lifehouse has funded a range of gymnasium equipment for our exercise physiology program. Patients are already benefitting from strength, balance and cardiovascular fitness testing and participating in group rehabilitation classes.

We appreciate the Mostyn family’s support and thank them for assisting us in giving patients access to the best possible holistic treatment and care.

“Supporting an organisation with a courageous vision is very rewarding. After a tour of Lifehouse and seeing the patient-centred concept first hand, we wanted to throw our support behind what makes Lifehouse so unique,” Cameron Mostyn.
My wife Tina and I had such an enormous love for each other. Four beautiful kids are living testament to this love and I am so grateful for the time we had together. Tina was diagnosed with ‘the big C’ as they call it in 2002, just eighteen months after we moved the whole family to Australia from the Philippines. Tina was offered a role lecturing at the University of New South Wales. It was a new beginning for our family. When Tina was diagnosed, it was very surreal, a shock and all happened so quickly. After she passed away, I was in a daze for about seven months – just going through the motions, getting the kids to school, and then immersing myself in my new job at Lifehouse. I think I was on auto-pilot for a long time. And then eventually I realised the dream was over, this was reality and I had to deal with it.

I wanted to give back in some way, but it took me a long time to realise it and do something purposeful; something that ultimately made me feel better about the situation.

Last year, my colleague Rosie Brennan encouraged me to sign up for the Weekend To End Women’s Cancers – we had worked together at RPA before we both came to Lifehouse. I was a bit nervous about asking people to donate to my walk. I hadn’t initially realised Lifehouse relies on fundraising activities to be able to offer our patients all the amazing services that we do. But they gave, because they weren’t giving me money, they were supporting a cause that makes things easier for people with cancer, and they supported me wholeheartedly. I was overwhelmed by the experience.

Until we set off on the 60km walk, I didn’t recognise the incredible impact I was making, and underestimated the feeling of gratitude I experienced. I knew Tina was with me, in my heart, walking with me and I talked to her during the walk. She donated her hair during her treatment – I wanted to keep it but she wanted it to go to help others going through treatment. Selfless. She was a beautiful soul.

I need to raise $2,000 to participate again in November but I know I will have no problem doing this. I will ask my church this year for their help. This year I’d like to see us all wearing pink wigs or something else to make our team distinctive. It’s part of my healing process and I want to keep being involved in making things better for people who get cancer, because they didn’t ask for it.

I encourage everyone to get involved because it is for such a worthwhile cause. I’ll never forget that incredible feeling while I walked – even through a heat wave, and then rain the next day – we were contributing to something monumentally great and it helps us feel good about ourselves and the future.

The Weekend To End Women’s Cancers is one of the major fundraising events for Chris O’Brien Lifehouse. Last year, the inaugural Weekend raised $3.4 million to help us offer those unique patient services above and beyond operational costs. Things like our patient transport service led by generous volunteers, the LivingRoom’s nutritional consultations, the new gym for our exercise physiology program and counselling for families – all of which help our patients deal with treatment, side effects and getting through possibly the worst period of their lives as best they can.

We thank Roel for bravely sharing his story with our supporters.
The past few decades have seen radical developments in cancer treatments, significantly increasing survival rates and recovery times for patients, whilst simultaneously reducing the impact of side effects of treatments.

In particular, there have been a number of advances in radiation therapy, also known as radiation oncology, which uses high energy radiation to shrink tumours and destroy cancer cells.

With more than thirty years of experience in oncology medicine, Darren Martin has experienced first-hand the incredible developments in technology. Darren, Assistant Director of Radiation Therapy at Chris O’Brien Lifehouse believes the most significant overall improvement has been in the specific identification of tumours.

“There are now imaging modalities that allow for more accurate detection and delivery of treatment with a higher degree of accuracy,” says Darren.

“We fuse PET scans and MRI, essentially overlaying them, so we can more accurately locate and analyse a tumour. Radiation beams are subsequently more highly targeted and this results in more effective treatment for our patients”.

Advances in technology have also enabled therapists to deliver higher doses of radiation and minimise damage to healthy organs in close proximity to tumours, improving outcomes for patients. We have also seen a reduction in the side effects of radiation therapy, as a result of improvements in technology. 4D imaging is just one example of advancement in treatment. Often used to treat lung tumours, it allows therapists to visualise and treat the tumour as it moves, when the patient breathes.

“Previously we had to estimate on average how far a tumour would move during breathing, which meant we used a larger volume of radiation than was needed to compensate for the movement,” Darren explains.

“For a similar reason, we have also witnessed advances in prostate cancer treatment. The prostate moves, especially when the bladder or bowel fills, so it can be difficult to target the precise treatment area. By injecting small gold seeds into the prostate we can see more precisely where the prostate is located during imaging, allowing us to provide treatment with more precision.

“Internally Modulated Radio Therapy (IMRT)) has hugely improved patient outcomes. It allows the radiation to be modulated, so instead of giving a uniform dose across the beam we can increase or decrease the strength in different parts of the beam. It means we can bend the radiation around the spinal cord, for example. Years ago we could only treat squares and circular areas – now we can shape the beam. We recently started using an updated version of IMRT called Rapid Arc, which delivers treatment even faster, facilitating shorter treatment times.

Radiation treatment has improved to the extent it is being used in place of surgery for some types of cancer, such as early stage lung cancer, liver metastases and some brain tumours.

“We can treat smaller areas and patients are able to avoid some of the more intrusive surgical procedures. We are seeing an increase in the number of patients benefitting from this technique.”

Over the past few decades Darren has seen huge leaps in the effectiveness of radiation treatments. We have well and truly reached the point of tailoring treatments to the individual requirements of our patients.
For several months now, Amanda Solomon and Deborah Burdett have been walking around the Lifehouse building with their orange aprons, wheelie carts full of colourful fabrics, pots and drawings, and most of all, their generous smiles and laughter.

Amanda (pictured right) and Deborah (on the left) are the creators of Arterie, an innovative model of art engagement specifically designed for healthcare. The aim of the program, currently in its six-month pilot stage, is to improve outcomes for Lifehouse patients, families and carers by easing the symptoms of cancer treatment (such as stress, pain and fatigue) through art and craft activities.

The program currently includes monthly lectures, art workshops, artists in residence program and the mobile trolleys ‘carterie’.

“All our activities allow people to jump in and out as suits them. Everyone, from all ages and skill levels, can participate – patients, families and Lifehouse staff,” Deborah explains.

“The idea is to provide a ‘normalising’ activity during medical treatment,” Amanda adds.

Art journaling, miniature constructions, hand drawings, knitting and sewing or collage projects are some of the activities offered on the mobile ‘carteries’. Group workshops cover a range of mediums and are facilitated by emerging and established artists. The lecture series is a forum to showcase the overlap and benefits of art health programs.

Arterie was born out of Amanda and Deborah’s passion and belief that creative arts can have significant positive effects on patients following diagnosis, during treatment and recovery. The feedback received from participants has confirmed their belief.

“We have been asking participants to fill out a questionnaire about the program and the comments we have received have been incredibly positive. Everyone has been very encouraging,” Amanda says.

Amanda is no stranger to the benefits of art for the healthcare sector, having participated in a number of hospital-based artist-led workshops in conjunction with Kaldor Public Art Projects (The Sydney Children’s Hospital Randwick, 2012). Amanda has also worked as an arts educator, supporting the elderly, the disabled and those affected by dementia. She is currently a guide at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

“The initiative we’re delivering at Lifehouse is exactly what we had set out to achieve... It feels so right to be offering patients relief through art. I feel privileged to be able to give back,” Amanda says.

Deborah, a practicing artist, former member of the Wingecarribee Shire Public Arts Advisory Committee and a town planner, sees Arterie as the perfect culmination of their combined life experiences.

“Deborah and Amanda have been friends since 1988 and their camaraderie is felt from the first minute you meet them.

“We offer this program pro bono and it took more than a year’s work behind the scenes to get everything up and running. It is incredibly gratifying to interact with patients on a daily basis, get to know them and see their smiles,” Deborah says.

“Amanda and I work so well together and spark off each other. And we think most of our ideas are great,” she jests.

The Arterie pair is certainly not short of ideas for the future of the project, whose pilot will run until August 2014.

They hope to expand their offering and, over time, spread throughout Lifehouse’s walls some of the amazing creations from those who have dared to let their imagination run wild.

For more information visit www.mylifehouse.org.au or telephone us on 1300 852 500.

Upcoming Arterie engagements

Carterie: Every Tuesday to Thursday throughout Lifehouse, 10am to 3:30pm
Workshop: ‘LittleLifehouses’ by ceramicist/artist Eloise Rankin, Wednesday, 23 April, 2-4pm in the LivingRoom

If you’d like to find out more or support services like Arterie with a tax-deductible donation, visit www.mylifehouse.org.au or telephone us on 1300 852 500.

Arterie injects colour and art into patient care

Deborah Burdett and Amanda Solomon

“All our personal and professional experiences and skills accumulated over the years are brought together in this program,” she says. “Plus, I get to make people laugh and give them companionship – it is such a rewarding experience.”
A nourishing collaboration

This is a cookbook like no other. *The Patient Chef* is a collection of more than 80 nutritious, tasty recipes recommended by cancer patients, their families and those who work with them. Contributions include recipes for soups, smoothies, pasta dishes and sweet treats, beautifully photographed, and edited by Jane Alliker.

Renowned chefs Kylie Kwong, Maggie Beer, Guillaume Brahimi, Serge Dansereau, Peter Gilmore and Matt Moran have generously contributed their recipes. All royalties will fund research programs and patient services at Lifehouse.

Gail O’Brien wrote a message to all readers, supporting them on their treatment journey –

“Chris and I walked the frightening path that many of you are now travelling... I scoured the internet for nutritional support. This collection of recipes and tips that Jane has painstakingly collected, and which have been so generously donated by patients and their carers, will help you on this journey. And I dearly hope that journey is made easier for you.”

This beautiful book is available for $24.99 from the Lifehouse eShop. Visit [shop.mylifehouse.org.au](http://shop.mylifehouse.org.au) or telephone us on 1300 852 500.

If you would like to receive our quarterly posted newsletters by email rather than mail (and help us save on costs) please sign up to our e-newsletter at [mylifehouse.org.au](http://mylifehouse.org.au) or phone us on 1300 852 500. Thank you for your continued support.