

## Hello again!

Hello everyone. Welcome to our first 2019 edition of the Working With Cancer newsletter, and let's hope



this is a wonderful year for everyone whether you are a Remainer, a Brexiteer, or just depressed because it's January!

In this Winter edition, we include:

- **A blog about the impact of fatigue** on our lives post cancer and how it's being tackled (or not) by health professionals
- **A link to a recently published White Paper about transforming breast cancer provision across Europe** from screening through to survivorship. WWC is closely involved in this initiative.
- **A sad anecdote: how poor communication about cancer at work** can cause terrible misunderstandings
- **A profile of WWC associate Mary McPhail.**
- **Some more news about our second open workshop for employers on 5th March.**

And, as I always say, if there is anything else you'd like us to cover, do please get in touch! [admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk](mailto:admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk).

## More sleep won't do it – tackling cancer related fatigue

Fatigue is one of the most common side effects of cancer. It affects between 70 and 80 out of every 100 people and can have a devastating physical and psychological impact on the lives of cancer survivors. It often goes on for weeks, months or even years after treatment and can also cause an individual severe financial problems if they are unable to return to full-time or part-time work.

Here are some [excerpts](#) from a longer article published in Cancerworld (no. 84, Winter 2018/2019) which discusses the benefits of exercise in helping to alleviate fatigue.



## New Collaborative Initiative to Improve Breast Cancer Prevention, Diagnosis and Care Across Europe

Earlier this week, the Transforming Breast Cancer Initiative published a white paper, which provides a comprehensive evaluation of the status of breast cancer prevention, diagnosis and care across Europe and finds there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to ensure equal access and better outcomes for patients across Europe.



To address these challenges, the initiative renewed its 'Call for Change', which constitute 9 policy tasks aimed at improving breast cancer prevention and care. These include the need to address the differences in cancer care across European Member States, the importance of diagnosing and treating breast cancer in the early stages, the need for support in the workplace for patients suffering from breast cancer, and the unique needs of patients with advanced breast cancer. More [info here](#).

## Poor communication causing terrible misunderstanding

*True story, though the names have been changed*   
"John was the Head of IT at a big financial services company. His manager came to see me saying that John was being very aggressive to other staff and he thought he was drinking on duty. He asked me to have a word with John about his drinking, which I did. John was upset to hear what I was saying, and said he wasn't drinking but he would be careful about his behaviour in future."

About six months later, his manager came to see me again and said that John was becoming more aggressive and was now drinking so much that his speech was slurred and he had fallen over in the office. He suggested we have an initial disciplinary conversation with him which we arranged. When we opened the meeting to discuss John's behaviour after a long silence he informed us that a few months' ago he had had a recurrence of a brain tumour and had not wanted to tell anyone for fear it would damage his career. He would soon be starting chemotherapy.

We were appalled that he hadn't felt able to tell us about his condition. We provided him with what support we could over the next few weeks until his death a few months later."

## In the spotlight: Mary McPhail

I was Chief Executive of a global non-governmental organisation with a very busy work and travel schedule when I was diagnosed with breast cancer in May 2012. I made the decision to continue to work through what was to become 18 months of treatment.

This is not a decision that everyone can make. It all depends on the type of cancer diagnosis, the intensity of the treatment regime, the particular job role and how much flexibility the workplace is willing or able to facilitate.

In my case it was the right decision for me but what I found most difficult was that none of the amazing professionals who did support me through my treatment were willing to have that conversation with me. The result was that I felt quite alone in making what was a very important decision both for me and for the organisation that I worked for.

A year into my treatment my husband was also diagnosed with cancer. Another shock to the system of course and another round of hospital appointments and treatment. I am pleased to say we are both well and still working now. I finished my full-time job in December 2014 and went on to retrain as a life coach in 2016. When I met Barbara and heard of the approach that Working with Cancer takes to supporting people at all stages of their cancer and work journey it was like music to my ears and I am happy to say that I have been working as an associate coach with the wonderful WWC team since late 2017. It is a great privilege to work alongside Barbara and the dedicated professional team that provide such responsive and sensitive coaching to people who have a cancer diagnosis and who are working.



## Did you know.....

- There are 28 million cancer survivors worldwide.
- Breast cancer is more common in the left breast than the right. The left breast is 5 - 10% more likely to develop cancer than the right breast. The left side of the body is also 10% more prone to melanoma (a type of skin cancer). Nobody is exactly sure why this is.
- Naked mole rats are immune to cancer! The body of these subterranean African mammals is rich in a substance called hyaluronan, which acts as a lubricant in the body and stops cancers growing. This discovery could lead to treatments for cancer in the future. But have you seen what they look like!!! More about this phenomenon [here](#).

## WWC Open Workshop For Employers on 5<sup>th</sup> March, London

We ran a very successful open workshop last July on 'How to fully support employees affected by cancer at work' and we will be **running another at 1 London Wall Place, London on 5th March.**

This highly practical and participative workshop covers areas such as handling communication and difficult conversations sensitively, understanding how to support employees from diagnosis through to a return to work and beyond, the legal framework and workplace adjustments, and how to develop a cancer strategy, policies and action plans. If you'd like to reserve a place, email us at [admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk](mailto:admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk)



## And finally....

WWC is always happy to arrange speakers for conferences and events.

If you would like to book us for an event, do please contact us at

[admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk](mailto:admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk).

You can also follow us on Twitter for the latest news & updates: [@WorkWithCancer](https://twitter.com/WorkWithCancer)

Tel: 07910 835585 or visit our website at [www.workingwithcancer.co.uk](http://www.workingwithcancer.co.uk)

