



Ahead of Time A Photography Exhibition

Singapore, 16 June 2022 - '**Ahead of Time**' is a unique photography exhibition featuring 25 breast cancer survivors with 25 courageous stories of stopping breast cancer ahead of time.

9 notable Singapore photographers (*refer to Annex for photographers' bios*) have come forth to present this visual storytelling journey:

Aik Beng Chia
Charlie Lim
Lavender Chang
Lee Jen
Mark Law
Nicky Loh
Russel Wong
William Chua
Willy Foo

Through photography and storytelling, we want to portray the strength, vulnerability, and resilience of those affected by breast cancer.

The featured women (*refer to Annex for survivors' bios*), aged 34 to 71 years old, come from all walks of life. Their breast cancer journeys are filled with challenges such as having to face mortality and body image issues and navigating a new normal. There are also lessons in love, gratitude, reconciliation, and appreciation of life.

We hope these stories inspire as much as they educate everyone and spark conversations about the importance of breast health. Members of the public are invited to join BCF for the exhibition taking place at the **ION Art Gallery** from **17 to 30 June 2022**. Admission is free.

In Singapore, while 94.4% of Singapore women are aware of mammography, only 41.3% Chinese, 43.2% Indian and a low percentage of 17.6% of Malay women have gone for mammogram screenings in the last 2 years, according to the National Population Health Survey 2019 (published on 28 Dec 2020). Breast cancer accounts for more than 1/3 of all cancer diagnoses within each ethnic group, with 28.9% incidence amongst Chinese, 29.0% Malays and 35.7% Indians. Survival rates have improved due to early detection and the availability of better treatment options. The 5-year survival rate for those diagnosed at an early stage has significantly improved in the past 50 years from 49.9% to 82.1%*.

*"We hope that women realize the importance of early detection, are empowered with knowledge to erase the fears and myths that breast cancer is associated with and take charge of their breast health. Detecting breast cancer early can make a significant difference in health outcomes and staying vigilant can save a woman's life." said **Ms Staphnie Tang, President, Breast Cancer Foundation.***

*"'Ahead of Time' isn't just a showcase of courage, vulnerability and resilience; it's 25 reminders why early detection is important. We hope this exhibition will kickstart important discussions about breast health. A big thank you to the 9 photographers who have contributed their time and talent to help tell these women's inspiring stories," shares **Mr Thomas Yang, Executive Creative Director, DDB Group Singapore, joint creative collaborator with BCF for this project.***

BCF is grateful to sponsors - **Cancer Can Give by AstraZeneca, FWD, SHEIN,** and exhibition venue partner, **ION Art at ION Orchard.**

*"As a global fashion brand, SHEIN is committed to empowering individuals and giving back to the communities that we source from, and work and live in. Women's health and wellness is a cause that we are passionate to support. We are heartened to continue our partnership with the Breast Cancer Foundation on this exhibition. The breast cancer survivors featured in this exhibition demonstrate courage and inspire hope for others," said **Mr Leonard Lin, Global Head, Government & Public Relations and Head, Singapore, SHEIN.***

*Singapore Cancer Registry, 50th Anniversary Monograph, published in 2019

After June 2022, the exhibition will travel to the heartlands in the form of a **digital exhibition** using QR codes and technology to showcase these photographs and their life transforming narrations in 4 languages. This will bring the powerful message of breast cancer awareness and early detection via breast screening closer to the people. The digital exhibition will start from **July-Dec 2022** with details found on the website: www.bcf.org.sg/AheadofTime (*website will go live on 16 June 2022*).

Ahead of Time - The Film

A 2-minute film titled '**Ahead of Time**' will be launched at the official opening of the Photography Exhibition on 16 June 2022.

This is a BCF creative collaboration with DDB Group Singapore, together with one of Singapore's most talented film directors, Mr Roslee Yusof from Freeflow Productions and Fuse Adventures in Audio.

Mr Roslee Yusof has been involved in stunning film productions for Singapore Airlines, Singapore Tourism Board, The Republic of Singapore Navy, Health Promotion Board and the memorable Public Utilities Board 2019 Hari Raya short film "Kinship".

*"Shooting this film, watching the scenarios play out made me promise to myself that I never want to be in the position of our protagonist. It's a universal message and it's applicable beyond breast cancer. To cherish and protect our loved ones, we have to look after ourselves too," said **Mr Roslee Yusof, Film Director, Freeflow Productions.***

Ahead of Time – the film follows the story of a mum who holds nothing back in readying her young son for his future. With what seems like an Asian Tiger Mum approach, she makes sure he learns everything – household chores, dressing up, dining etiquette, and even operating a car.

Clearly, these lessons are not meant for someone his age; Mum is way ahead of time. **Just why is she pushing him so hard?**

ANNEX

A. Photographers' Biographies

<p>Aik Beng Chia</p>	<p>Aik Beng Chia, or ABC, as his friends/fans call him, is the author of <i>Tonight the Streets are Ours</i> (2013), a monograph on Singapore's Little India district after dusk, <i>SingKarPor</i> (2015) and a glut of highly acclaimed self-published zines (2010 – ongoing). He has also been a collaborator with brands like Apple, Leica, Fujifilm, Singapore Tourism Board and The Guardian. His works have been exhibited and published internationally to great success.</p>
<p>Charlie Lim</p>	<p>Charlie Lim is a veteran in the field with more than 40 years of experience. Through years of research, he has developed a new art form that he calls "Paintography". His unique works have attracted the attention of news media and was featured on TV Manila, Channel U Singapore, ChannelNewsAsia, TV Vietnam and TV Taiwan. He was invited as an international speaker at the WPPM in Malaysia and the PhotoWorld Asia Photo Congress in Philippines.</p>
<p>Lavender Chang</p>	<p>Lavender Chang is a recipient of national and international accolades, including recognition by Singapore's President Design Awards, France+Singapore photographic Art Awards and Noise Singapore. Her works have been exhibited worldwide, including at Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Singapore, Alliance Française de Singapour, National Gallery Singapore, and International Film Festival Rotterdam, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Dubai and New York.</p>
<p>Lee Jen</p>	<p>Lee Jen has been a lensman for over 35 years. The founder of J Studio is an accomplished photographer for people, product, food and interior photography. Lee Jen chooses instinct over rules and draws inspiration from light, texture and memories.</p>
<p>Mark Law</p>	<p>Mark studied photography at the famed London College of printing. His passion and forte are in capturing people, be it for fashion editorials, or for commercials with talents or celebrities. This ability to combine the edginess of fashion photography with commercial demands has allowed him to be successful, and remain current and relevant, while retaining traditional techniques and photographic values.</p>
<p>Nicky Loh</p>	<p>Nicky Loh is a photographer/director who is based primarily in Singapore, Taipei and Shanghai. If not, he is constantly on the road seeking projects to tell meaningful stories. Starting at Reuters as a photojournalist in Taiwan, that part of him has shaped how he shoots with emotional intimacy. His craft explores the journeys taken by people and placing them into authentic imagery. Nicky's list of commercial clients also includes Nike, McDonalds, HSBC and Singapore Airlines.</p>

Russel Wong	<p>Russel Wong is one of the most profiled photographers in Singapore and Asia. Described as a 'celebrity photographer who also photographs celebrities', Wong enjoys the acclaim of being the first Singaporean to break into the notoriously difficult Hollywood movie industry. He is also one of an elite group of photographers assigned to photograph covers for Time magazine, 17 to date. He has also worked with Oscar-winning directors like Ang Lee, and Zhang Yimou, and has created images for the posters and publicity of Oscar-winning movies. Popularly noted for his photographs of celebrities such as Richard Gere, Jackie Chan, Michelle Yeoh, Zhang Ziyi, Isabella Rossellini and even President Obama. His limited-edition prints have also been sold at the prestigious Christie's auction house.</p>
William Chua	<p>William Chua has been a Fujifilm ambassador for the last 8 years. He is an international award-winning photographer based in Singapore. His works have been published in various publications (including SilverKris Magazine, Drukair Magazine, Asian Geographic, Geographical Magazine (UK) etc). The images have also been consistently placed with the Natgeo Editor's favourites through the years. William's images are also represented by Modern Art Etc, based in Los Angeles, California for sale as Fine Art Prints.</p>
Willy Foo	<p>Willy Foo is the CEO and founder of LiveStudios Interactive Photography. He is a tech entrepreneur who seeks to combine his passion of technology with the art of photography. Willy's career took a turn when he decided to turn his photography hobby into a profession in year 2000, wiring his camera to a notebook carried in a backpack which was then wirelessly transmitted to the projector and web simultaneously.</p>

Survivor Profiles

1. Purjanti Chang, 52

Daughter: Kelly Chang

Purjanti will never look at mosquito bites the same way again. A bite at the park caused her to almost lose a finger owing to her weakened immunity from chemotherapy.

It all started in October 2011, when Purjanti learned of her diagnosis. *How could this happen to me?* she thought. None of her family members or relatives had breast cancer.

With cancer, Purjanti was unsure what tomorrow would bring. Future plans were all thrown into a sea of doubts. For someone who was used to planning consistently ahead, it was tough. Eventually, Purjanti grew to savour the present and live life to the fullest. She and her loved ones urge fellow women to conduct self-breast examinations and to be grateful for life's little things.

2. Venetia Ang, 51

Son: Samuel Cham

“Your condition is not your conclusion.” Those words from Venetia’s pastor, a breast cancer survivor, drove Venetia through her cancer journey.

The bad news hit in October 2019. Cancer had invaded her lymph nodes and the diagnosis was clear: locally advanced breast cancer. Venetia was stunned as she felt well. She had only discovered a lump on her upper right chest but not on her breasts. Though devastated, Venetia bravely confronted her diagnosis. She underwent mastectomy surgery, six gruelling months of chemotherapy and a month of radiation treatments, with the support of her family and colleagues.

Attending monthly BCF support group meetings served as the greatest pillar of support in her battle. A strong support network allowed Venetia to stay hopeful and tenacious – she knew she wasn’t alone. Now, Venetia wants to be that shining light for others.

Never give up hope and continue fighting the battle. And remember to do your monthly breast self-check.

3. Nurhana Binte Abdul Ghani, 38

Daughter: Aleesya Adriana Son: Md Aleef Arrian, Anaqi Affan

When Nurhana first noticed a tiny bump on her breast, she didn’t worry too much. After all, she had a benign lump in her left breast when she was 16 and had it promptly removed.

It wasn’t the same story this time around. The lump grew bigger over three months. She visited a specialist. Tests after tests led to the confirmation of her worst fear – breast cancer. Flushed in the face of mortality, an unstoppable train of concerns began rushing into her mind. *Will I be able to see my kids grow up? What will happen to them? Who will look after them?*

But Nurhana never gave up on hope.

Treatment proved to be the hardest part of the battle. Yet she held onto her family and friends' emotional support and crossed the finish line. Nurhana had her third child about a year after her final chemotherapy session.

"Whatever challenges I may face, I will always fight it and come back stronger. Cancer could be just one of the curve balls thrown at me."

4. Cheryl Lee, 71

Daughter: Shelley See Son: Calvin See

A Death Sentence - that was what Cheryl felt when the biopsy tests confirmed she had breast cancer.

It started 22 years ago when she had a pain in her arm. The doctor suggested a mammogram and ultrasound. The mammogram result was negative but the ultrasound revealed a 1.5cm suspicious lump located deep in her left breast. That night, Cheryl and her husband prayed and cried. The surgeon recommended mastectomy – a total removal of her left breast immediately. Cheryl, however, sought a second opinion and decided on lumpectomy – removal of the lump followed by radiotherapy.

The traumatic experience transformed her perspective of life. She became more positive as she felt God had given her a second chance.

Now, she treasures her family and friends, counts her blessings, and takes things one day at a time. Cheryl volunteers as a BCF Support Coordinator where she shares, listens and provides emotional support to new patients and survivors.

"Early detection and action is key to survival, through monthly breast self-examinations and annual mammograms for those aged 40 years and older."

5. Eryannie Mohamad, 41

Daughter: Dinah Qistina

When Eryannie learned about her diagnosis, she wasn't angry nor sad. Instead, she was in a dilemma – to tell the truth or hide it from everyone? She kept it from her middle child who was taking the PSLE, and her youngest child who was then 10 years old.

Eryannie went through mastectomy and reconstruction on her affected breast, 16 cycles of IV chemotherapy and 5 years of oral chemotherapy.

Her days were not the same since the treatment. She was frail and weak. Her husband and eldest son supported her by taking on major responsibilities around the house.

When she finally told her daughters, they put up a brave front for their mother, checking on her often and supporting her emotionally. Eryannie found courage among her BCF group and participated in yoga and walks.

Today, Eryannie is armed with an increased faith in life and a positive perspective of life. She embraces every moment with loved ones.

6. Anne Ang, 50

Daughter: Micaela Toh

Anne first discovered a lump in her breast during a shower. She was crushed upon hearing her diagnosis but she knew she had to be strong. Her daughter was only in Primary 1 while her son was about to take his PSLE examination. Anne was doing a part-time degree in BSc Psychology.

Her greatest pillar of support is her husband, who never failed to be there with her at every doctor's appointment and chemotherapy session. He was patient and tolerant with Anne when she became temperamental and jumpy during this time. Her faith kept her going. Anne believes that all things happen for a reason.

Anne lives life to the fullest in these past 10 years, participating in sports she had never tried before.

"I have learnt to let go of things that I cannot control, and that happiness is a choice. I treasure the people around me and want to spend time with people who are important to me."

7. Rebekah Mak, 42

Daughter: Isabelle Liew Son: Wesley Liew

Rebekah's mum left her after battling with breast cancer for 5 years. In July 2019, she felt lumps in her breast that didn't go away after two months. The day when she went for her check became the last day she stepped into the office. She was diagnosed with Stage 2 ER/PR positive breast cancer.

She was in a delirium – a sheep lost and confused. *How was she going to break the news to her dad who had just lost his wife a year ago and to her husband and children?* She went about the day but after much tears and prayers, she told her family.

She went through a suite of genetic tests and cancer treatments. But she kept at her exercises after each chemo session.

While she could not answer "why me?", cancer had changed her life to smell the roses and engage in activities like dragonboating, crocheting, cooking and baking. She lives in the present and savours every moment.

8. Wang Shiow Mei, 62

Daughter: Chua Jia Ying Son: Chua Rui De

A persistent and acute pain on the breast prompted Shiow Mei to seek medical advice. The news of an invasive breast tumour plunged her into a deep and dark hole of fear and devastation.

Joining BCF support group inspired Shiow Mei with a glimmer of optimism. BCF volunteers provided her with constant words of encouragement, care, and support. She became more composed and courageous in confronting her doubts.

Cancer was life-transforming for her. “A positive mindset is everything. Beating cancer is never easy, but I can still find joy and gratitude for the rest of my life”. For Shiow Mei, cancer was a chance to internalise and re-evaluate her personal values, goals and priorities. It gave her time and space to reconnect with her inner self and those around her and strengthened her sense of purpose in life.

9. Julia Lim, 57

Son: Angus Siew

Being able to live a normal life may sound ordinary. But for Julia, it's a blessing that she doesn't take for granted at all.

Back in 2007, her life was disrupted by the discovery of a lump on her right breast. Wasting no time, she sought medical advice. A mammogram and scan revealed that the lump was 98% malignant. That number got her shivering with fear. But even as she wrestled with doubts and worries in her head, she knew she had to act fast. The doctor's plan was chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Back at home, moral support from her family and sisters kept her going. They helped to manage the household, so she didn't have more worries piled up.

Thankfully, early detection saved Julia's life. Now in remission, she continues to do what she loves. She engages in art and music therapy while mingling with like-minded cancer survivors.

10. Dorothy Lok, 47

Son: Cody Low

Toughened muscles from boxing was what Dorothy initially thought of for her hardened right breast. “*Can't be breast cancer*”, she assured herself as it was not a lump. The hardness, however, persisted even after she stopped training for months.

During a full body check-up that included a mammogram and ultrasound, a few very tiny bubbles were found. The radiologist assured her that there was nothing to worry about. Months later, the bubbles cleared. Still troubled by the hardness, she went for an ultrasound and a lump “hiding” near the chest wall was found.

The discovery set numerous worries and anxiety racing through Dorothy's mind. But her faith provided much solace in the face of uncertainty. Family and friends stood by her. Together with a friend who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, Dorothy underwent the tough cancer-fighting journey.

Today as she continues recovering, Dorothy has changed her lifestyle habits. She now focuses on exercising and eating healthy, while being less uptight about work.

11. Amy Neary, 52

Son: Aiden Neary

On her son's 4th birthday, Amy woke up excited to celebrate with him. But it came to a screeching halt when her doctor said "You have cancer" after a routine mammogram. Amy felt like time had stopped, a mind overwhelmed with a cacophony of emotions - anger, frustration and resentment.

During the early part of her cancer journey, Amy's mentor told her that she was at a fork in the road. She could choose the 'new' road with a new normal filled with fresh growth opportunities or she could continue down the 'same' road and try to go back to the way things were – setting herself up for failure as things would never be the same after a cancer diagnosis. Amy chose the new road focusing less on work or materialistic things, and spending as much time as possible with her family who supported her most during her journey.

She urges those going through this journey to leverage on their support networks and use cancer as an opportunity for growth.

12. Jayanthi Kanagaratnam, 63

Daughter: Vinodini Devi Yoohenthiran

In early 2014, Jayanthi felt a small bump on her right breast but ignored it as a pimple. Four months later, it grew bigger. A 4cm large tumour was discovered and biopsy results diagnosed Jayanthi with Stage 2A, Ductal Carcinoma Breast Cancer.

Her whole world seemed to fall apart – her elder daughter was planning her wedding and her second daughter was preparing to leave for Australia to do her degree. However, she found comfort in her faith and family support.

Eventually, Jayanthi met the two goals that drove her through the battle – she witnessed her second daughter's graduation from the University of Australia in 2016 and attended her elder daughter's wedding in 2017. Cancer has taught Jayanthi to be kinder, more humble and more understanding. Now, she tries her best to stay positive and enjoys her time with her little grandson.

13. Cellina Lim, 62

Daughter: Carolyn Kok

If Cellina had missed that critical mammogram session, her story might have been a bleak one. She'd not done her checks for the last five years but thankfully, she broke the streak.

Upon hearing her diagnosis, her mind went blank. Then came conflicting emotions of self-pity and denial. When it all finally set in, Cellina knew she had to have a plan. Placing her confidence in her surgeon, Cellina followed the advice given on cancer treatment.

Tumultuous as her journey was, Cellina had immense support – from family, friends and her faith. Her church friend, who was a breast cancer survivor, offered a listening ear and advice to tide through the storm.

Now that she's recovered from breast cancer, health is top priority in Cellina's mind. "This experience has changed my perspective of life. I now put myself first and set aside time for myself."

14. Aisha Jiffry, 43

Daughter: Alyssa M Iqbal Son: Aqeel M Iqbal

The hospital requested for Aisha to arrive two hours ahead of her follow-up appointment. *Why did the doctor want to see me earlier?* Aisha wondered. Aisha instinctively knew it was the big C.

Aisha struggled with her emotions after her major surgery. Her new image, battle scars and her breasts that temporarily turned blue from surgery served as incessant reminders of an irreversible truth – life was no longer the same. Yet she didn't have to go at it alone. An overflow of emotional support came from her family, relatives, best friends, doctor and even teachers and staff at her children's school. BCF and Ain Society also helped Aisha regain her confidence.

Having a jovial plastic surgeon added cheer to her journey. "I was assured my blue reconstructed breast would eventually become normal, and that I won't become a smurf," Aisha shared jokingly. She now values life more than ever and aspires to make the most out of it, by creating beautiful memories and living boldly.

15. Noren Suseno, 62

Daughter: Liyana Soh

For almost 10 years, Noren's right breast repeatedly gave her false alarms. So when the breast surgeon told Noren that the scan revealed something in her left breast, she was calm.

The scan revealed a 2.9cm growth and something in 3 of her axillary lymph nodes. A biopsy confirmed the cancer. Noren's immediate worry was how her two daughters would cope when they had already lost their dad to lung cancer.

The duo set their minds on battling against the potential eventuality for their mum. They were always there and at Noren's lowest moments, they stood ready to lift her up.

As someone who has been through a near fatal road accident, the sudden passing of her husband, and now breast cancer, Noren has learnt a lot. She advises women to dwell less on situations they can't change and focus on dealing with what's ahead. She also advocates being mindful about healthy eating, exercising and making time for self-care.

16. Hannah Hui, 54

Son: Lim Yi Jie

When Hannah learned of her diagnosis, her whole world collapsed. Her tears seemed unstoppable for days. But her sheer tenacity to live pushed her forward— she was not going to let cancer stop her from seeing her children grow up. It was time to move into action with treatment.

As Hannah's journey began, her family was the pillar of support she needed. Her husband stood unflinchingly by her side, while her children learnt to manage their studies independently. Meanwhile, church-mates took turns to cook for her and offered plenty of emotional support. Hannah felt deeply encouraged by the stories of those who had been there before her. These survivors didn't let breast cancer have the last say and went on to live fruitful lives after treatment.

"Life can still be colourful and beautiful even after being diagnosed with breast cancer. Being diagnosed illuminated what really mattered and what's worth investing in," says a determined Hannah, who now chooses to live life to the fullest without regrets.

17. Jenny Teo, 70

Son: Jerry Loh

At 43 years old, Jenny felt she was too young for breast cancer. But cancer thought otherwise. When she first felt a lump on the top of her left breast, she sensed something was amiss. This prompted her to visit the hospital immediately for a mammogram — her first ever. Her mind went blank after receiving the diagnosis. It was something she never saw coming.

Wanting to focus on her recovery, Jenny resigned from her fashion designer job. Her motivation was clear – she had to win this for her 19 years old daughter and 12 years old son. She stayed optimistic by engaging in singing, drawing, trekking, and even participating in the International Mandarin Toastmasters Club.

It's been 24 years since Jenny's brush with breast cancer. She now gives back to the community as a BCF Volunteer, wanting to bring hope not just to the public but also to herself.

18. Lydia Kwa, 60

Daughter: Yasmine Neo Son: Richmond Neo

A Death Sentence ... That's what Lydia's breast cancer diagnosis at first felt like. As someone with no prior knowledge of breast cancer, she reckoned she had to prepare for the end.

With support from her family, she found strength and motivation to pull through. Even the slightest frown on her face would get their attention, and they'd find ways to cheer her up.

Post recovery, Lydia only wanted to spend her time with family. Then another health scare happened. Though it was a false alarm, it challenged her perspective. She joined BCF to provide support to fellow warriors and participated in BCF activities from yoga to dancing. Her confidence grew. She found herself making friends, many whom she now holds close to her heart.

Lydia urges all women to keep abreast of breast cancer early detection methods, and not to neglect their health despite busy schedules. “Not all cancer diagnoses are death sentences. Exposing yourself to information such as survival rates, treatment options and other related knowledge will reduce your fear,” says Lydia.

19. Bylapudi Gowri Vara Lakshmi, 39

Daughter: Bhuvi

The pain on her breast felt like that of a piercing needle. It didn't wane even after 6 months. When she consulted a doctor for her fever, Lakshmi took the chance to raise her concern. The eventual diagnosis of breast cancer left her shocked and devastated – she was only 36 years old.

Several decisions, big and small, soon needed to be made. Though Lakshmi's husband was deputed to China for work, he never left her to confront everything alone. He was closely involved in discussions and decisions. Lakshmi had her daughter to lean on for support too. As a pillar of strength, Lakshmi's daughter never once gave up, even when Lakshmi almost did.

After over 2 years, Lakshmi found her way out of the darkness and recovered from breast cancer. She now focuses on her personal health and aspires to fulfil her family's dreams.

20. Erika Behl, 45

Son: Arun Behl

For breastfeeding mums, lumps are common. Naturally, Erika felt it was fine to ignore the one in her left breast. She also believed that breastfeeding could reduce her risk of breast cancer.

But when a close colleague was diagnosed with breast cancer in her mid-30s, Erika was shaken out of her denial. She knew she had to see a doctor. Within days, Erika was diagnosed with breast cancer herself. Erika was worried about her children who were still young.

As she journeyed on, she chose to “control the controllable”, devouring information on lifestyle changes that she could make to increase her odds of long-term survival.

Cancer may have thrown a wrench into everything but after she got past the grieving, she created a new vision of her life going forward. Post treatment, Erika is now the fittest she has been in years. “I set myself goals and have picked up new sports such as stand-up paddling and kayaking, which give me a sense of accomplishment and joy,” says Erika proudly.

21. Ana Guija, 51

Daughter: Almudena Guija

When Ana started on her breast cancer journey, she never expected it to lead to a new path with a fresh beginning. Today, she enjoys life through Zumba, dragonboating, crocheting and spending time with family and friends.

It did feel like the end of the world just years ago. With the lump in her right breast growing rapidly, Ana couldn't delay it anymore. The myriad of tests, scans and biopsies that followed

gave her panic attacks. It was so bad she couldn't fall asleep at night. While the cancer was eventually confirmed, the medical team addressed Ana's worries, offering her much-needed relief and hope.

Ana stayed optimistic. Her parents even travelled all the way from Peru just to journey with her. "During Circuit Breaker, when I needed to go to the hospital alone, I took as 'me-time'," she shares.

With cancer, Ana has learnt that everything will pass – be it the good or bad – and to live positively, one day at a time.

22. Alisandra Khairuddin, 50

Daughter: Mira Cannock

Alisandra's cancer diagnosis came as a bombshell. Her mum had died from breast cancer when she was seven and it seemed like history was going to repeat itself. Devastated, she even planned to buy advanced birthday presents for her daughters.

Alisandra didn't cope well physically. With infections in her implants, she had to be on antibiotics for 6 months. Eventually, Alisandra chose to remove her prosthetics and go "flat" – she even created and shared a social media video about it. The decision was an emotional one, but Alisandra felt liberated. Drawing strength from her close ones, Alisandra kept at it. She also spent time speaking to those who didn't know her, as she felt comfortable being her "new" self before them.

Alisandra found solace in pilates and gradually, weight training, which helped rebuild her mobility and strength. "Now, I make my health a priority because I'm the glue that holds the family together. Our family is stronger than ever, and my girls are my bedrock."

23. Dai Wei, 34

Daughter: Michelle Xu

At 29 years old, Dai Wei was young, active and fit. Moreover, she had no family history of breast cancer. After finishing the breastfeeding of her first child, she was ready for the next phase of family life. Breast cancer was unimaginable – but it happened.

Bracing herself for the journey ahead, Dai Wei scoured through medical articles and sought help from her family, friends and various support groups. She needed to be fully equipped as she confronted the disease. Though she was weaker and looked physically different, her husband and daughter treated her the same way. Each day was also just like any other ordinary one. They accompanied Dai Wei as much as they could, respected her decisions and satisfied all her cravings.

Dai Wei's support groups of young ladies also kept her going. Together, they shared about their treatment plans, daily lives, emotions and struggles, and also their lives after recovery.

24. Siti Dzaleha, 52

Daughter: Sheikha Zulkiffle

For Siti, the best medicine for cancer is gratitude, a full appreciation of life and a positive mindset. This realisation, though, wasn't apparent to her when she first discovered she had breast cancer.

Back then, a prickly sensation on her left breast had signalled that something was amiss. When the diagnosis was delivered, the doctor's words splintered inside her. She never saw it coming as she had gotten an all-clear from a mammogram just nine months ago. Still, Siti tried her best to control her emotions. The news wasn't a death sentence – she would focus on getting well again as quickly as possible. With the support of her husband, mum and best friend, she journeyed towards recovery.

Along the way, Siti felt she became a better person. "I've learnt to be more receptive and positive. In fact, I became much stronger and determined to fight the cancer until I became well again," she shares.

25. Irene Chui, 57

Daughter: Seetoh Suying

From beating breast cancer, Irene has gone on to defy limits together with her BCF dragon boat team. She had initially joined BCF Paddlers in Pink just to keep fit and now, Irene captains the team to represent Singapore in competitions.

It wasn't an easy journey. In her 10-year fight against breast cancer, Irene has had to remove both her breasts and ovaries – on top of chemotherapy, hormonal treatments, reconstruction surgeries and other challenges. It was one of the hardest periods of her life, but Irene got through it with the support of her husband, sisters and parents.

Irene now treasures everyone around her more and takes time to slow down. "Cancer has taught me that I'm not always in control. Life is full of experiences, lessons, heartbreak and pain. But then it has also shown me love, beauty, possibilities and new beginnings. Embrace it all, it makes us who we are and strengthens us. After every storm comes a clear sky," says Irene.

BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION

Breast Cancer Foundation (BCF) is a social service agency which advocates for the early detection of breast cancer and supports the breast cancer community in Singapore. Established since 1997 in Singapore, BCF actively raises breast cancer awareness through talks, events and publications that advocate for early detection through regular screening. BCF supports those affected by breast cancer through psycho-social programmes, support groups and befriending activities. BCF offers subsidy assistance to support low-income women for their first-time mammogram screenings and runs a complimentary wig loan programme. As a registered charity in Singapore, BCF is self-funded and is dependent on public donations to provide quality services and programmes for more women and their families. BCF runs Singapore's very first Breast Cancer Centre at Sin Ming Court. The Centre also welcomes members of the public who wish to find out more about breast cancer.

For more information, please visit www.bcf.org.sg. For updates on BCF's latest work and initiatives, follow BCF at @BreastCancerFoundationSg (Facebook), @bcfsg (Instagram), and Breast Cancer Foundation (LinkedIn).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Ms Jaime Teo

Head, Advocacy & Communications

E: jaime.teo@bcf.org.sg

T: 6933 4737

Ms Kharuna Jaichandra

Senior Executive PR & Communications

E: kharuna.jaichandra@bcf.org.sg

T: 6933 4736

Breast Cancer Centre

Address Blk 441 Sin Ming Avenue, #01-417 Singapore 570441

Operating Hours Mondays to Fridays, 9 am to 6 pm (closed on Sat, Sun & Public Holiday)