

## AWCG Newsletter 2019



Dear Friends,



I hope you have settled back into your normal routine after the indulgences of the festive season and are ready for all the challenges that the New Year brings.

In this 2019 issue of the Newsletter we share the highlights of last year and our programme for this year. Read an account of a members' cancer journey and an article from a local GP about lifestyle.

In 2018 several of our members took part in a live broadcast on Sunrise Radio as a part of "Stand up to Cancer Campaign" to raise awareness about cancer by sharing their cancer journey on Sunrise Radio. The message 'it is okay to talk about cancer' was clear and reached many listeners.

As always we continue to support National Cancer charities. Our presence at the Harrow Relay for life has become a routine and members and their family had a fun filled day raising vital funds for the work of Cancer Research UK. Our alternative coffee morning is another popular event and once again by popular demand we hosted Indian 'Garba' folk dancing and raised funds for Macmillan Cancer Care and Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Our subsidised daytime Yoga and Mindfulness activities are very well attended and are important part of looking after yourself initiative.

This year we enjoyed the Christmas lights in the West End in an open top bus. Thanks to our sponsors for such a kind gesture.

I step down from my position of Chairperson in March 2019 and leave you in very capable hands of Rohini Patel. My special thanks to the committee members and Volunteers who have always supported me during my tenure and all the members for attending the meetings and supporting each other.

Kind Regards,

**Kunji Patel**

**AWCG Chairperson**

[www.asianwomencancergroup.co.uk](http://www.asianwomencancergroup.co.uk)

**Shaila Rasania – The Cancer Journey that made me Alive.....**



I was diagnosed with breast cancer in Jan 2006. It was an absolute earth shattering news. I was completely unprepared for this kind of diagnoses. Straight after the mammogram and biopsy, the treatment plan was in place –a ‘Mastectomy’, 6 monthly intravenous chemotherapy and 8 radiotherapies, followed by 5years of Arimidax .

After completing all the gruelling treatments, suffering all the side effects of chemotherapy, including complete hair loss, I was informed that I was now in Remission. What a relief! At the end of 5years of treatment, I was elated and celebrated with my friends and started living life to the full.

I started voluntary work for the Breast cancer Care admin office in Southwark and worked there for 3 years. During that time I had a chance to take part in an annual fundraiser Fashion Walk as one of the cat walk models. This was the proudest day of my life to be able achieve something on such a grand level. Nearly £400 thousand was raised in just one day.

I was enjoying life everything was going well, but this was short lived as in July2014, I started getting pains in my stomach and was having problems eating and lost a lot of weight and was so lethargic that I could hardly function. I decided to make an appointment with the oncologist after seeing my GP.

It was fresh round of tests and scans and the outcome was another tumour, a secondary cancer, this time in the lower part of the oesophagus. It was start of yet another course of intravenous chemotherapy on weekly basis. The side effects seemed worse than before with problems eating, nausea, further weight loss and hair loss. All these effects were getting me down and I couldn’t cope.

My Asian Women Cancer group ladies were very supportive, their visits and positive encouragements got me through the difficult cancer treatment journey.

Despite all the chemotherapy, the tumour was growing and started pressing on the other organs, the kidneys were effected most, as the tumour was obstructing the passing of the urine into the bladder.

My Oncologist gave me the bad news, after having more MRI & CT scans that my right kidney was failing and the left kidney needed to be rescued soon. I had to have stents in the Kidney and finally had to have Nephrostomy bag, attached to my body to collect the urine.

When I woke up after the procedure and the effects of the anaesthetic, I was devastated, I could not accept this attachment and the way my life had to change to accommodate this new health issues. I cried in front of the Macmillan nurse and my son and I went into depression for a few weeks, having to fiddle with the changing and emptying of the urine collecting bag was really getting me down.

One morning I woke up saw the sun shining birds flying children playing and laughing in the park, and something inside me clicked and I realised that I was letting myself down. I realised that these things happen in life, you just need to get on with it. Life is a gift and you need to make most of it no matter what. I was not going to let this illness beat me. I decided I was going to live the best I could. I snapped out of this dark spot in which I was suffocating and got myself on a positive path. Once I started believing in myself and got myself to have a smile on my face no matter what challenges were thrown at my feet I was going to walk tall and beat all odds.

I started taking more interest and leading the dance routine my support group was going to perform to raise funds for charity. Once I got the positive vibes flowing in my blood streams I was not going to let anything get me down. The difficulties in our life do not come to destroy us, but to help us to realise our hidden potentials. I took on board that when you can’t control what is happening, challenge yourself to control the way you respond to what’s happening. That’s where your true power is. With all the positive support from my cancer group friend I decided to celebrate my 60th birthday party in grand style with all friends and family. Despite no hair on my head I walked tall, danced the night and had the best time that evening with everyone that mattered to me

I liberated myself by letting go of all the negative thoughts and people. I was going to be happy, smiling and live with a positive attitude regardless of whatever is thrown at me, no time for sadness and tears.

Whenever I felt well I was out and about. I went to cinema or to restaurants or my favourite, evenings with music and dancing. I love dancing, it makes me feel happy and I forget all my aches and pains. I feel I can touch the sky because my heart is happy.

I believe that catastrophes happen in life, one just has to get on with it, and have faith in the Almighty and the cosmic power.

I am proud that I got 'the keeping my hair grey' trend going. I have taken part in the Fashion show cat walk for Breast Cancer Care, Photo shoots for medical pamphlets and magazines. Given talks on breast awareness at several places, e.g. Ladies groups, colleges, temples, and even taken part in advertising on how Macmillan can help cancer patients which is going to be used at hospitals and clinics.

I believe life is beautiful and it's up to you to recognise it.

Through this cancer journey I had lost My memory My confidence My hair and My will to live. But the support and Love from my Asian Women Cancer Group sisters gave me back reason to live.

I love all my group sisters with all my Heart and totally indebted to them for keeping my Soul alive....

The Cancer Journey that has made me Alive...

Shaila Rasania (1957- 2018)

***Despite Oral chemo and all the efforts by the Oncologist, in spring the cancer spread to base of liver around the stomach and small intestine and the new treatment- HRT TO SUPPRESS OESTROGEN FIGHTING HORMONES did not work and Shaila was transferred to St Luke's for palliative care. Sadly after writing this personal account of her journey, Shaila lost her battle against cancer and passed away in June 2018. It was her wish to share her story no matter what her demise was. We pay tribute to a great lady who is sadly missed by us all.***

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Check our website [www.asianwomencancergroup.co.uk](http://www.asianwomencancergroup.co.uk) for

Mother's Day Event

Harrow Relay for Life

Seminars

Summer Day Out

Summer Picnic

Macmillan Coffee Morning

End of Year Celebration



## The Blue Zones – Secret of their Success

The Blue Zones – areas in the world with the healthiest and longest living populations. Their secret to success? Lifestyle!

Where are the Blue Zones and what kind of lifestyle do they follow?

There are 5 areas that make up the Blue Zones: 1) Sardinia, Italy; 2) Ikaria, Greece; 3) Okinawa, Japan; 4) Loma Linda, California, USA; 5) Nicoya, Costa Rica.

When you look at the commonalities between these regions, you see that they all have a sense of family and social engagement, all partake in physical activity, do not smoke and, they have a special relationship with food! They all consume legumes (beans and lentils) and focus on a whole food (meaning no processed food) plant-based diet (WFPBD).

A plant-based diet centres on: 1) Fruits, 2) Vegetables, 3) Whole grains, 4) Legumes, 5) Nuts & Seeds, 6) Herbs & spices, 7) Mushrooms

This wonderful variety of vibrant and colourful foods provides innumerable vital nutrients (vitamins, minerals including calcium, phytochemicals, healthy carbohydrates, healthy fats, healthy protein), conferring great protection against diseases we know all too well in today's modern societies, such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and the list goes on.

We are also seeing that those with such diseases who embrace a WFPBD are able to improve and even reverse their health problems!

So why is there such a disparity between us and the Blue Zones?

Well, we find ourselves entrapped in the loop of the modern lifestyle. Far from centring on the Blue Zone ideals, our lives tend to be more frantic, focusing around our jobs and other outside responsibilities. This tends to lead to more stress and less ideal lifestyle choices, including our food. Fast food restaurants, processed and animal products are available everywhere, and it is these foods that cause damage to our gut and inflammation (or irritation) across the body. Modern scientific study is showing us that the gut and its residing bacteria are the first line of defence for the body, and if this is damaged, then we open a doorway to diseases. The inflammation that ensues is now being shown to be linked to many diseases we and our loved ones may experience.

This is not to say that our jobs and other outside responsibilities are not important, of course they are. But, we must ensure that we give ourselves the time we need, and provide the body, mind and soul all the nourishing goodness in order to enjoy a healthy and happy life.

A WFPBD is one facet of lifestyle to help ensure you and your loved ones are able to live as happily and healthily as you can. And far from restricting the foods you may enjoy (especially recently over Diwali and the new year!), one becomes more creative and connected to food, and you can still enjoy the things you do! I'd like to introduce you to a wonderful website – [www.sharan-india.org](http://www.sharan-india.org), which has lots of amazing WFPB information and recipes for Indian dishes, including savoury snacks and sweets. Explore and enjoy!

*Dr Mahesh Shah (MBBS, MRCGP)*

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**Anyone embarking on a new diet regime should do so after consulting their GP**

# Highlights of 2018

## Macmillan Coffee Morning



## Breast Cancer Care



## Harrow Relay for Life (Cancer Research UK)

## Relay Fashion Show



## Special Birthdays



## Picnic in Pinner Memorial Park



## 2019 MEETING DATES AND VENUE

All meetings are held at:

Gateway House, North Harrow Car Park, Pinner Road, North Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 7TA

	Yoga 1.30-3.30pm	Mindfulness 1.30-3.30pm	Therapy/Drop in 1.30-3.30pm	Evening Meeting 7.00- 9.00pm
January	8 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup> Macmillan Engagement Lead Emma Quintal
February	5 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup> AGM / Samixa Shah
March	5 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	29 <sup>th</sup> Lifestyle and health – Dr Mahesh Shah
April	2 <sup>rd</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup> Macmillan Acute Oncology services Helene Buijs
May	7 <sup>st</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup> Ayurvedic Consultant –Dr Seema Datta
June	4 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup> Members Evening/ Bhangra Dancing
July	2 <sup>rd</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup> Wellness Therapist – Bina Patel
August	<b>NO MEETING</b>			
September	3 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup> Colorectal Cancer – Manju Khanna
October	1 <sup>nd</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup> Psychologist – Dr Aditi Sharma
November	5 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	29 <sup>th</sup> Alzheimer and Dementia - Ela Jackson
December	<b>NO MEETING</b>			

**For Further information:**

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