

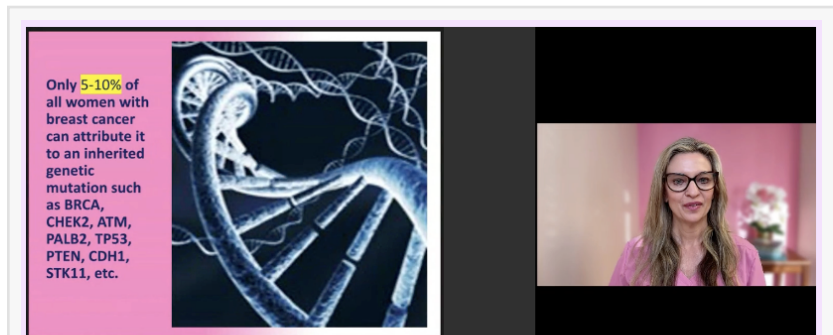
KNOW YOUR RISK, OWN YOUR STRENGTH: BCYW Foundation Empowering Breast Cancer Advocacy with Awareness and Personal Stories

BCYWF Shares Insights on Modifiable Risk Factors and Inspiring Personal Stories of Strength in the Global Fight Against Breast Cancer

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The [BCYW Foundation](#) hosted a powerful session at the recent International Conference on Young Women’s Breast Cancer and Health, featuring Dr. Kristi Funk—a renowned breast cancer surgeon, lifestyle medicine doctor, bestselling author, and international speaker—along with three remarkable breast cancer survivors and advocates: Tamara Hussong Milagre, who served as the moderator, and Krystal Barter and Siobhán Freeney.

Dr. Funk focused on breast cancer risk factors for younger women, highlighting those that are unchangeable and those that can be modified. Krystal and Siobhán shared their deeply personal journeys in the fight against breast cancer. Through these insights and personal stories, the foundation emphasized the importance of modifiable risk factors, awareness, early detection, and advocacy in empowering



Breast Cancer Risk Factors You Cannot Change
✓ Female
✓ Age
✓ Family history
✓ Inherited genetic mutations
✓ Race/ethnicity
✓ Radiation to chest wall
✓ Height
✓ Breast Density
✓ Early menarche/late menopause
✓ Personal history of marker lesions
✓ DES exposure
✓ Parity

Breast Cancer Risk Factors You Can Change
✓ Nutrition
✓ Exercise
✓ Body Weight
✓ Risky substances: Alcohol/Tobacco
✓ Environmental Toxicities
✓ Emotional Stress
✓ Fasting
✓ Sleep
✓ Microbiome Alterations
✓ Hormone Therapies: MHT, OCP, IUD

Glimpses from Dr. Kristi Funk's Lecture.



From Left to Right: Krystal Barter, Professor Chikako Shimizu and Tamara Hussong Milagre as moderators, followed by Siobhán Freeney.

women worldwide. Throughout the conference, participants engaged in insightful discussions focused on personalized healthcare and holistic care strategies to better support young women in their breast cancer journey.

The session began with a warm welcome from Tamara, setting the tone for this vital conversation. Attendees were privileged to hear from a leading breast cancer doctor who brings a rare combination of expertise in surgery and lifestyle medicine and two extraordinary women whose experiences have shaped their lives and driven impactful advocacy movements. Krystal Barter has pioneered efforts to raise awareness about BRCA mutations, while Siobhán Freeney has championed dense breast tissue awareness across Europe.

EMPOWERING CHOICES: REDUCING BREAST CANCER RISK THROUGH LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Despite advancements in treatment that have reduced breast cancer mortality rates in high-income countries by 1.3% annually, the global burden remains substantial. Dr. Funk emphasized that "Only 20% of women with breast cancer have a family history," underscoring the critical need to address non-genetic factors. She further added, "Lifestyle and environmental influences play a significant role in breast cancer risk, often presenting opportunities for prevention through informed decisions." "Prevention is possible through lifestyle changes, as many risk factors are within our control," Dr. Funk explains.



Upper row: Moderators & Speakers of the session on Know Your Risk; Lower row: Examples of audience engaging in the discussions throughout the meeting, L-to-R: Vijian Dhevan (USA), Marah Tabbal (UAE), Samantha Heller (USA), & Maria Jeanne Vrancken Peeters (Netherlands).



ONCOGLAM BOOTH: Speaking with a survivor and caring person is Beatriz de Sousa Viegas (center), a breast cancer survivor, a passionate advocate, and the Director General of ONCOGLAM—a leading Portuguese magazine covering cancer, beauty, health, fashion, and lifestyle.

Dr. Funk highlighted the importance of daily choices we make: "Every time you eat or don't eat strategically, you're choosing to either fuel or fight inflammation—the foundation for all health and illness;" and "Key preventive measures include maintaining a nutritious diet, engaging in regular exercise, avoiding tobacco and alcohol, and minimizing exposure to toxins and stress." As Dr. Funk stated, "You can't change your gender or genetics, but you can change your exposures and habits. Every decision matters."



Dr. Luis Costa and Dr. Rakesh Kumar, alongside speakers from both this and the morning session on 'Patient Voices.'

Advocating for early intervention, Dr. Funk stressed the importance of educating young people: "The easiest cure is prevention—real prevention. We need to offer health guidance starting in the teenage years. This proactive approach, coupled with early detection and lifestyle modifications, provides hope for reducing the global impact of breast cancer. Individuals can take meaningful steps to strengthen their defenses and lower their risk by making informed choices."

KRYSTAL BARTER: TRANSFORMING GENERATIONAL FAMILY GRIEF INTO ADVOCACY

A Family Legacy of Breast Cancer

Krystal opened the session with a poignant reflection on her family's battle with cancer: "I come from a family where cancer isn't just a risk—it's an expectation. Every woman in my family has battled breast or ovarian cancer. Across generations, we've lost nearly 20 women. My mother is the sole survivor, and 25 years ago, we became part of a genetic research project that first revealed the BRCA mutation in our family."

Choosing Prevention Over Fear

Krystal shared her journey of self-empowerment: "At 25, after a high-risk screening detected early calcifications, I chose to have a preventive double mastectomy. It wasn't an easy decision—I endured seven reconstruction surgeries over nine years. Today, I've chosen to remain flat, and despite the challenges, I have no regrets."

Advocacy and Inspiration

Krystal's advocacy journey began unexpectedly but became a lifeline for many: "Sharing my story through media platforms connected me with others, including Angelina Jolie, who reached out after being inspired by my journey. Genetic testing gave me something my family never had—a chance to fight back. As a 41-year-old mother of three, I know I've done everything possible to

live a longer, healthier life.”

SIOBHAN FREENEY: AMPLIFYING AWARENESS OF DENSE BREAST TISSUE

A Diagnosis Hidden in Plain Sight

Siobhán Freney recounted her experience of being diagnosed with lobular breast cancer nearly nine years ago: “Despite regular mammograms and repeated assurances, I was diagnosed with a 7-centimeter invasive cancer that had spread to my lymph nodes. This happened just six months after my last ‘clear’ mammogram. It was only later that I learned my dense breast tissue had masked the tumor for years.”

From Frustration to Advocacy

This revelation sparked Siobhán’s advocacy for dense breast tissue awareness: “Many women are unaware they have dense breasts or that mammograms have limitations in detecting tumors in such cases. Supplemental screening, like ultrasounds or MRIs, can be lifesaving but isn’t routinely offered. My work, inspired by advocates like the late Nancy Cappello, focuses on ensuring that women across Europe are informed and empowered to seek appropriate care.”

THE INTERSECTION OF STORIES AND ADVOCACY

During the discussion, the moderator invited Crystal and Siobhán to reflect on their advocacy journeys and the lessons they’ve learned.

Krystal Barter: “The most important lesson is that knowledge is power. Genetic testing gave me choices that weren’t available to my family before. But it’s not enough to just have the information—patients need guidance, support, and resources to make informed decisions.”

Siobhán Freney: “For me, it’s about tailored care. Women with dense breasts need personalized screening strategies, yet this isn’t standard practice in most healthcare systems. Advocacy bridges the gap between what patients need and what’s currently offered. It’s about empowering women to understand their bodies and advocate for better care.”

LOOKING FORWARD

The session concluded with a focus on actionable insights and transformative ideas to improve breast cancer awareness and care. The BCYW Foundation distilled the following themes for the future:

- **Power of Empowerment:** Education, early detection, and resilience are critical tools in empowering women to take charge of their health.
- **Informed Decision-Making:** Access to information about genetic risks and breast density equips women with the knowledge needed to make proactive, life-saving choices.
- **Personalized Care:** The significance of a tailored healthcare approach was evident throughout the session, highlighting the importance of screening and treatment strategies designed around individual risk profiles.
- **The Power of Advocacy:** The voices of patients, survivors, and their families remain essential in

driving policy reform, raising awareness, and fostering innovation in breast cancer care.

The BCYW Foundation remains committed to amplifying stories like Krystal and Siobhán's to promote education and awareness, ensuring that women everywhere have access to life-saving information and resources - one of the core missions of the Breast Cancer in Young Women Foundation.

Conference co-chairs Dr. Luis Costa and Dr. Rakesh Kumar closed the session with a group photo to commemorate the event, alongside all guest speakers from this and the morning session on 'Voices of Hope.'

ABOUT THE BCYW FOUNDATION

The BCYW Foundation is dedicated to advancing breast cancer awareness and advocacy through education, research, and community engagement. The foundation empowers women to take charge of their health and well-being by sharing inspiring stories and driving conversations around prevention and treatment. The BCYW Foundation relies on individual contributions and sponsors to raise the funds necessary to support its mission. [Donate to BCYW Foundation](#): Every contribution - big or small - helps the BCYW Foundation fulfil its mission to save the lives of young women from breast cancer in the years to come. Thank you for your generosity.

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