

# SpeakOut

The newsletter of Oracle Cancer Trust



LEADING RESEARCH INTO HEAD AND NECK CANCER

SUMMER 2019

## Oracle funded project for HPV-positive patients gains momentum with major grant funding

### Dr Shree Bhide's trial awarded £1.9m to start new study following Oracle's early-stage grant funding

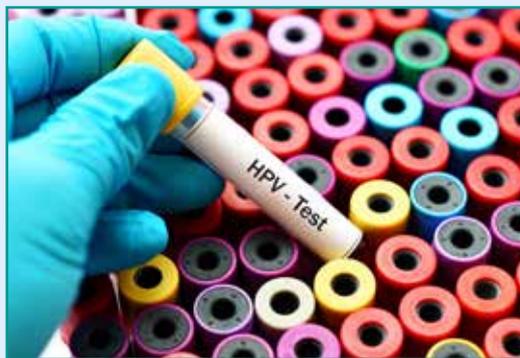
As well as alcohol and tobacco, the human papilloma virus (HPV) is a known risk factor in head and neck cancer. HPV-positive head and neck cancer has been rising over the past 30 years and is set to continue, with a predicted increase of an astonishing 230% in coming years.

In patients with HPV-positive head and neck cancer, it is not always clear from scans (PET-CT) if treatment with chemo-radiotherapy has been totally successful in clearing the cancer. In these cases, patients frequently undergo unnecessary neck dissection and repeated biopsies to make sure there is no disease remaining, also called residual disease. This can be a significant cause of death.

Dr Shree Bhide, an Associate Honorary Faculty member in The ICR's Division of Radiotherapy and Imaging, is the leader of a team awarded a £1.9 million grant from the Medical Research Council for his research into head and neck cancer. This grant follows on from a pilot study funded by Oracle Cancer Trust and will allow Dr Bhide to run a study to determine whether levels of human papillomavirus (HPV) DNA in the blood can be used as an indicator of residual tumours in some patients with the disease. If successful, his work could help to reduce the number of these patients who have neck surgery or repeat biopsies – which are currently the standard way to assess a patient's response to treatment following an inconclusive PET-CT scan.

The research will use a novel blood test for detection of circulating HPV DNA – "HPV-detect" developed by Dr Bhide and his team, recently described in a pilot study part supported by Oracle.

The benefit of this would be a



reduction in the number of patients undergoing unnecessary surgery, while making it easier to detect those patients who have relapsed. That study established that HPV-detect was able to determine whether patients who had HPV-positive head and neck cancer still had remaining tumours after chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Once HPV-detect has been validated in a larger population, the next step will be to implement it into clinical practice.

By developing a test that can detect residual tumours in these patients, the researchers hope to reduce the number of patients undergoing surgery, while making it easier to detect those patients who have relapsed. Not only could this blood based screening and monitoring tool be of benefit to head and neck cancer patients but could also be used to detect circulating HPV DNA in all HPV driven cancers.

*Says Dr Bhide:*

"Our pilot study showed that our blood test for HPV DNA can be used to identify how patients have responded to treatment.

"With this new study, we hope to validate these results in a larger group of patients, and determine if there are any barriers to the test's adoption by the NHS. This is vital, as we believe HPV-detect has the potential to spare these patients unnecessary surgery and significantly improve their quality of life."



Project in focus - Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma



Claridges Fundraising Dinner



HPV Virus - the ticking time bomb



Dear Oracle Family,

It's a real honour to be able to welcome you to this Summer 2019 edition of SpeakOut. This edition of the newsletter is very poignant for me. After many years of fundraising in memory of my father I had the pleasure of being asked to join the Oracle board in 2017.



For me the theme of this edition is celebrating the Oracle Family. It is just incredible to think how many of us complete walks, half-marathons, quizzes and parties. I hope you enjoy reading about what everyone does to have fun while raising funds, and maybe if you aren't already, you'll be inspired to give it a go too.

Thanks to everyone's efforts, we have been able to fund several new research projects and you'll see an introduction to the work poised to get underway as well as an update on those that are more established. It is a good time for head and neck cancer as we are seeing some incredible discoveries in immunotherapy, diagnostic tools and refinements in treatments.

We are especially keen to expand our PhD programme as it is a good way to drive more innovation in head and neck cancer. So, this year we have a new initiative aimed at funding new PhD grants which will attract new talent into the field. The Sir Adrian Swire Pioneers Fund has been created thanks to the Swire Charitable Trust in memory of Sir Adrian Swire. They have pledged to match the first £100,000 made towards the Fund and we are delighted to have already raised £50,000 towards this already, thanks to the wonderful dinner at Claridges which you can read about on page 9 and the support of other charitable trusts too. Our overall aim is to raise £500,000 and establish four new PhD grants by 2021. If you would like to find out more, please contact the team, all the details are below.

While these huge sums are incredible, the majority of our work is thanks to everyone you who supports us year-round, rain or shine. On page 7 you'll be able to read about how people who make small donations throughout the year are getting to see first-hand what their generosity is making happen. Oracle Friends is a scheme where people set up a regular gift and are invited to meet leading researchers across the country and see behind the scenes in some of the most pioneering laboratories in the UK. If you'd like to join Oracle Friends you could call us on 020 3875 8991 or complete and return the enclosed slip.

Lastly, I'm delighted to welcome a new member to the team, Grace Martin who takes over as our medical communications and research officer. She is busy managing the research application process as well as the ever-growing portfolio of research projects and translating some of our exciting work to supporters.

With best wishes

Nicola Ridges-Jones  
**Trustee**

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## Contact details:

**If you would like to get in touch with any member of the team here's how you can contact us:**

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Please note the team all work part-time.

## Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma - the race to discover new treatments

**This rare cancer that mainly affects women has no effective treatment if the cancer recurs following surgery. And, with low long-term survival rates, Oracle Cancer Trust is dedicated to funding research to discover potential breakthroughs for this devastating type of cancer.**

Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma (ACC) is a rare form of adenocarcinoma, a type of cancer that begins in glandular tissues (a group of cells that produce and release substances such as hormones into the bloodstream). ACC arises within glands most commonly in the major and minor salivary glands of the head and neck.

ACC accounts for about 1% of all cases of head and neck cancer. It is more prevalent in women, accounting for nearly two thirds of all new cases diagnosed. A contributing factor to this gender difference is due to the number of cases at female and male specific sites, accounting for 14.5% and 0.4% of cases overall.



Professor Arturo Sala with his team at Brunel University in London. Prof Sala is an expert in researching rare diseases

The cause of ACC is currently unknown, however it does not appear to run in families. There is evidence that it likely develops from genetic changes that occur over the patient's lifetime, and, although the changes may be caused by environmental exposures, there are no strong environmental risk factors for ACC that have been identified to date. The genetic mutations are only present in the cancer cells, and not in the egg and sperm cells which are passed on to the next generation. Research data on ACC is low so it is still unknown whether a parent with ACC can increase the chance of a child developing the disease.

Contrary to other head and neck cancers, lifestyle choices such as smoking or alcohol use are not linked to increased risk of ACC. Infection by the human papilloma virus (HPV) also does not seem to increase risk.

There has been evidence that ACC tumour cells are associated with the presence of too much of a protein called "myb," and with the inactivation of the p53 tumour suppressor gene in advanced disease.

### Oracle's ACC Research Programme

- Oracle has committed over £450k in research funding to tackle this rare and aggressive form of cancer with two new projects starting in Autumn 2019
- Two projects are at The Institute of Cancer Research under the supervision of Prof Kevin Harrington and one at Brunel University under the supervision of Prof Arturo Sala
- The current ACC project run by PhD researcher Alex Rose is making great progress and we look forward to sharing updates in the next issue

The p53 gene normally limits cell growth by monitoring the rate at which cells divide, and thus its suppression could result in uncontrolled cell growth.

More research is currently under way to better understand how ACC develops.

Symptoms of adenoid cystic carcinoma, which may include headaches and seizures, depend on the tumour's location. Tumours on the salivary glands may cause painless masses in the mouth or face. Tumours of the lacrimal gland (small almond-shaped structure that secretes tears and is located just above the upper, outer corner of each eye) cause a bulging eye or changes in vision. Those situated in the windpipe or voice box may cause respiratory symptoms or changes in speech.

More advanced tumours may spread along the nerves, resulting in pain and nerve paralysis. It may also spread through the bloodstream. In contrast to most head and neck cancers, ACC rarely spreads to the lymph nodes, occurring in about 5% to 10% of cases.

Both new and recurrent tumours may be identified by a CT scan or MRI. Biopsies followed by an assessment are used for diagnosis.

Treatment depends on many factors and may include surgery, radiation, and/or chemotherapy.

Unfortunately, ACC arising in the head and neck is typically an aggressive form of cancer that has a poor prognosis but tumours arising in some sites (such as the breast, although rare) may have a better prognosis. Its slow but relentless growth means it can spread to other parts of the body before any symptoms arise, such as the lungs, liver or bones, where it is more serious. ACCs are also particularly prone to recurrence. About 90% of patients will survive at least 5 years, but this quickly drops to only 40% surviving 15 years.

Read more about Oracle's ACC research at: [oraclecancertrust.org/research](http://oraclecancertrust.org/research)

# HPV: the ticking time bomb

## As the new vaccination programme for boys begins in the UK in September, Oracle Honorary Trustee Professor Chris Nutting speaks about the urgent need to vaccinate against the HPV virus

Since 2008 girls aged 12 and 13 in the UK have been offered the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine to protect them against cervical cancer. Now new research in Scotland shows that those vaccinated have a significantly reduced risk of developing the disease, which is nearly always caused by an infection with a high risk type of HPV.

A University of Edinburgh research programme looked at 138,692 women born between 1988 and 1996 who had a cervical cancer screening test at the age of 20. Examining the abnormal cells the team discovered that, compared to unvaccinated women born in 1988, there was an 89 per cent reduction in the high risk CIN3 cells. There was also an 88 per cent reduction in the lower risk CIN2 cells and a 79 per cent in the CIN1 low risk group.



Oracle's Honorary Trustee and Consultant Head and Neck Oncologist  
Prof Chris Nutting

But a lesser known associated risk has been steadily increasing alongside this success. HPV is a commonly occurring group of viruses affecting up to 95 per cent of the population causing minor complaints such as warts, verrucas and, as a result of sexual contact, genital warts. "It's a transient virus that causes minor respiratory tract symptoms and clears within a few months of infection", says Prof Nutting, consultant head and neck oncologist at The Royal Marsden Hospital in London.

"But in less than half a per cent the virus persists and creates the risk of a cancer 30-40 years later."

Prof Nutting and other head and neck specialists are seeing a 40 per cent increase in cases of HPV-related throat cancer among much younger men than the previously accepted demographic. "Throat cancer is the single fastest growing cancer and the patients are getting younger, with 75 per cent of the total HPV throat cancer patients being men," he says, "The average age of development of a head and neck cancer from smoking and drinking is 70, but from the virus is about 55-60. For the past five years, we have been able to test the tumour and we can see which ones are caused by HPV and these are largely among middle class, healthy, educated non-smokers.

It doesn't seem to be genetic – we are not seeing fathers and sons – so the cause is more likely to be environmental, such as poor immunity or nutrition."

Most of the patients with tonsil cancer are around 45-65 and were probably infected as teenagers or young adults with the greater risk associated with a higher number of sexual partners. "The virus infects the person and some of the virus's genetic material gets incorporated into the lining of the cervix or throat and eventually leads to cervical or throat cancer, as well as penile and anal cancers," says Prof Nutting.

### Screening and vaccination programmes

The risk of cervical cancer from HPV infection for women has been known for many years and has resulted in a successful screening programme. Cervical cancer has a long premalignant phase before it turns into cancer and it can be treated before it becomes malignant, which is almost unique. "After 2000 we looked at a vaccine to prevent cervical cancer in girls; the school based programme began in 2008 with the aim to vaccinate girls before they become sexually active," Prof Nutting says.

Along with colleagues Prof Nutting then began to press for a vaccination for 12-13 year old boys, a programme that was agreed by the UK government in June last year. Like the girls' programme it will be free but, unlike the girls, the boys will not be offered a catch-up option for those outside the age bracket. However, high street pharmacies are already offering the vaccine for parents who wish to immunise their sons. Originally conceived as a course of three injections, it is now a two shot programme which is being offered by chemists at the price charged by the pharmaceutical companies. There have been no health concerns around the use of the HPV vaccine.

# HPV: the ticking time bomb

“Initially the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation didn’t agree to the boys’ vaccination plan and they claimed that the boys would be protected by herd immunity,” Prof Nutting observes. “But in the UK we are not a fixed population and we cannot assume herd protection will fully protect boys”.



“The challenge will be to maintain high vaccination rates in our young people to keep the protection high. Current UK vaccination levels vary from about 60 to 85 per cent. The lower uptake regions generally follow social demographics, but some wealthy areas also have low vaccination rates. This is due to vaccine hesitancy, where some parents feel their child doesn’t need to be vaccinated if everyone else is, relying on the herd immunity. I am worried about this going forward.

You only need a big scare such as the one in Japan around HPV vaccination risk where a big social media-generated scare said the vaccine could cause neurological damage in children. This was completely unjustified as the HPV vaccine is very safe, but as a result, the programme dropped from 80 per cent take up to near zero and is only going recovering slowly.”

## Treatment options and education

In the UK there are 2,500 cases of throat cancer a year and the associated costs for treatment now and in the future are high. The most common presentation is a lump in the neck, and at that stage, the cancer is still treatable. “Often primary care practitioners such as GPs think it is a dental infection,” Prof Nutting says. “Patients have a cure rate of nearly 90 per cent if they have never smoked and if they have smoked for 10 years then they still have a 70 per cent cure rate, so it is very good.”

“The treatment is heavy going – six weeks of radiation and chemotherapy. The patients are never quite the same again with resulting effects on their swallowing, speech and taste for the rest of their lives,” he continues. “So we are keen to inform GPs and we have a programme at The Royal Marsden Hospital where we invite them to the hospital for an education day.”

## HPV: the facts

- ➔ 75% of HPV throat cancer patients are men
- ➔ The period between the HPV infection and cancer is 30-40 years in men; the reasons why aren’t known
- ➔ In non-smokers cure rates are as high as 90%
- ➔ There are 2,500 new cases of throat cancer a year with the most common symptom being a lump in the neck
- ➔ The majority of patients are in the age range of between 45-65 years

Other countries that have an HPV vaccination programme include Australia, Sweden and Denmark. In the United States where the number of sexual contacts per adult is greater than Europe, 70-80 per cent of new throat cancer cases in the big cities are now down to HPV infection. “As some teenagers will never be vaccinated, the incidence of cancer will go up in the short term. 40 years down the line they will start to drop,” he considers.

“The lag period between infection and the cancer is for women for pre-cancer is 10-15 years and for throat cancer in men is 30-40 years and we don’t know why this is. But until it is under control, HPV is a ticking time bomb.”

## Are you interesting in learning more about Oracle’s work into HPV head and neck cancer?

Join us at our free annual research evening on Tuesday 15th October 2019 in London. Register at [oraclecancertrust.org/events](http://oraclecancertrust.org/events) or email the team at [events@oraclecancertrust.org](mailto:events@oraclecancertrust.org)

## 5th Annual Research Reception

We look forward to welcoming all our supporters to our fifth annual research reception being held at The London Suites Hotel set in the historic Minories in the City of London, just a few moments walk from Tower Hill tube station.

Joining us at this free evening event will be leading cancer researchers Prof Kevin Harrington, ACC research leaders Dr Amanda Swain from The ICR and Prof Arturo Sala from Brunel University as well as the teams of PhD and post-doctoral researchers.

Now in its fifth year, this popular evening event is a great way to come and meet other like-minded supporters and learn about our research work that is completely funded by donations. There is also an exhibition area with all the projects on display where you can hear about the projects in more detail from the researchers.

During the evening there will be a welcome drinks reception, and following the short presentations a buffet will be served which has been generously sponsored by our Vice-President Tony Matharu.

Oracle is currently funding 16 projects at scientific research institutions around the UK in surgery, radiotherapy, immuno- and virus therapies, imaging and drug development. Our research projects are at the forefront of leading scientific research for head and neck cancer - come and learn more about these exciting developments.

### How to register:

[oraclecancertrust.org/events](http://oraclecancertrust.org/events)

email [events@oraclecancertrust.org](mailto:events@oraclecancertrust.org)

call us on 020 3875 8991



### Save the date!

Tuesday 15th October

Annual Research Reception  
London Tower Suites  
The Minories, London EC3  
Free evening supporters  
event

## The 14th Glory of Christmas Concert - tickets now on sale



Sir Michael Morpurgo will once again be reading and singing for the audience

Tickets are on sale now for the 14th Glory of Christmas Concert being held at the beautiful music venue of St John's Smith Square in London on Monday 2nd December 2019 at 7.30pm. This year we are delighted to announce that our Patron, Sir Michael Morpurgo will once again be reading – and singing at this year's concert.

The evening is a wonderful celebration of music from The Thames Chamber Orchestra accompanied by the stunning voices of The Choir of Christ's College, Cambridge. The evening features much-loved classical pieces from Bach and Handel as well as seasonal carols under the musical direction of conductor Keith Marshall.

This year we are delighted to welcome two special guest performers, soloist Theo Golden and saxophonist Robert Burton. Countertenor Theo Golden is studying Music at Durham University having been awarded a Vice Chancellor's Music Scholarship and has previously held the prestigious post of Alto Choral Scholar at Wells Cathedral. Saxophonist Robert won the Woodwind Category Final of BBC Young Musician 2018 and secured a place in the Grand Final of the competition. He is currently studying Classical Saxophone at the Royal Academy of Music.

Following the concert we will also be hosting a sponsored drinks reception and welcome all guests to join us for some Christmas cheer with the whole team from Oracle.



Saxophonist Robert Burton will be performing at this year's concert

Tickets are on sale now direct from the Box Office at St John's Smith Square and can be booked online at [www.sjss.org.uk](http://www.sjss.org.uk) or by calling the team on 020 7222 1061. Ticket prices range from £10-£45.

## Getting friendly with science

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We were thrilled to be able to bring Oracle Friends, Carole, Ian and Denis to see some of the funded research in action at The ICR in Sutton recently.

Our funded PhD scientist, Elise Lopicard was the focus of the visit. Elise has spent the last 3 years investigating how doctors might be able to make head and neck cancer tumours more susceptible to treatments.



Elise's work on hypoxia, or low oxygen supply in tumours could be important in making sure drugs get to these hard to reach parts of cancer. She has a year to go in her work and we're looking forward to hearing the final results. We were joined by Elise's supervisor, Dr Simon Robinson, who showed us round some of their collection of incredible scanning equipment, all housed in specially built labs capable of holding their weight whilst protecting staff too. It was quite an extraordinary afternoon visiting the heart of pioneering cancer research.

As Oracle Friends, we invited Carole, Ian and Denis to see what their monthly donations are making possible. All Oracle Friends get a lot of love from us as you help us fund more of the brilliant research taking place at leading scientific institutions around the UK.

Carole and Ian, who have been Oracle Friends for over four years, travelled to Sutton from Salisbury said "A big thank you to you for arranging such an interesting and informative visit. We were very honoured to be able to see some of the amazing work these clever and dedicated people are doing on our behalf."

Denis, who was a lab technician in his early working life said "a very warm thank you for organising today's event. I found the opportunity to talk to all involved in the project very interesting and stimulating. It is a long time since I have been in a real science laboratory!"

We're hoping to hold two more visits to our labs across the country in 2019 for Oracle Friends, and if you'd like to join us, we'd be delighted.

It is so easy to become an Oracle Friend, visit our website [oraclecancertrust.org/donate/oracle-friends](http://oraclecancertrust.org/donate/oracle-friends), or give Teresa or Sarah a call on 020 3875 8991.

A regular monthly donation makes supporting us easy and affordable, and it helps Oracle commit to more incredible research.

## Oxford Research Reception

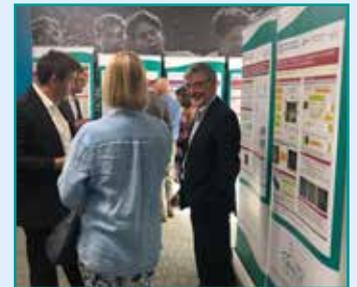
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We were delighted to welcome guests from the Thames Valley region to our first research supporters event which was held in Oxford in June.



During the evening event we heard from Oncologist Dr Ketan Shah along with head and neck surgeon Mr Stuart Winter who gave an outline of the breadth of Oracle's funded research work taking place around the UK.

Funded PhD student Julia Hoebart from The ICR presented her exciting immunotherapy project and we also welcomed ICR researcher Eva Crespo Rodriguez who shared details of research projects in the exhibition area.



We are very grateful to Critchleys Accountants for generously hosting the event at their offices in Central Oxford. We will be hosting another event in 2020 and will announce a date soon.

## BAHNO Conference

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BAHNO, the British Association of Head & Neck Oncologists is a multi-disciplinary society for healthcare professionals involved in the study and treatment of head and neck cancer. Every year Oracle sponsors the keynote speaker at the Annual Conference, named "The Blair Hesketh Lecture" a fund that was established by the family in his memory to support this prestigious annual lecture.

This year's Blair Hesketh lecture we welcomed Professor Maura L. Gillison, Professor of Thoracic/Head and Neck Medical Oncology from The MD Anderson Cancer Center in Texas. Professor Gillison's lecture was titled "The management of HPV and oropharyngeal cancer – To de-escalate or not to de-escalate, is that the question?"

## Bec Davies challenges to raise £10,000 in memory of her father



Bec Davies with her husband Adam and daughter at the Swansea Half

“My father, Jeff, was diagnosed with stage 1 tongue cancer undergoing major surgery followed by radiotherapy in the belief that he would be cured of the disease. In that time, he and my mother had planned holidays together travelling to Japan and to Florida as a family with his grandchildren, and were planning lots of adventures ahead. That was until it was cruel enough to re-emerge as stage 4 cancer that had spread to his neck within two months of him ringing the ‘Rainbow Bell’ signalling the end of his radiotherapy treatment at The Velindre Cancer Centre in Cardiff. We tried everything to help my father and even visited The Royal Marsden Hospital in London in the hope that we could find a treatment to help him. Even with the prospect of living with incurable cancer, he took everything that they could possibly throw at him and he wanted more. In the end, his body was too weak to withstand it.

“Cancer is a cruel disease but there is something very devastating and physical about head and neck cancer that causes great discomfort for not only patients but also carers and their families. It was very distressing for my father and for us seeing the cancer grow and eventually take over his neck making it impossible for him to eat and, in the end, breathe. My father is deeply missed and leaves a massive hole in our lives. If love could cure cancer he would still be with us but unfortunately there is still a way to go to treating and curing it.

“At his funeral in March we asked everyone to wear red in his memory - my father was a lifelong Manchester United supporter and we are deeply touched that donations from his funeral alone have raised over £4,500 to date.

“In memory of my father we have all got together as a family and set ourselves a target of £10,000 to raise for Oracle Cancer Trust. In 2019 our fundraising kicked off with the Swansea Half-Marathon and follows by a trek in the Pyrenees, skydiving and, in 2020 we are walking the Welsh Three Peaks with the climax being a visit to Everest Base Camp in October. Raising this money won't bring my father back but I hope it will in some way go towards helping others.” *Bec Davies*

## Anika raises over £6,000 in memory of her brother Christian



Anika completes the Reading half-marathon

“My brother Christian died last October, days after his 41st birthday. Having first had tongue cancer when he was 26, much of his life was affected by the disease which was cruel enough to re-emerge last year as throat cancer. Life is not the same without Chris and we all think of him daily. Raising money in Chris' memory won't bring him back, but it will help in so many ways to raise awareness and research for head and neck cancer.

“Chris was under the care of the team at The Blenheim Head and Neck Unit in Oxford and we are so grateful for the amazing care he received during his treatment. As a way of raising money I decided to take on the Reading Half-Marathon. I had originally planned to run the event in 2018 but it was snowed off and even though I battled wind and driving rain during the lead up to this year's event I was determined to finish the run.

“My initial fundraising target was set at £600 and I was overwhelmed by the support of friends and family near and far who so generously supported me to end up raising well over £6,000.

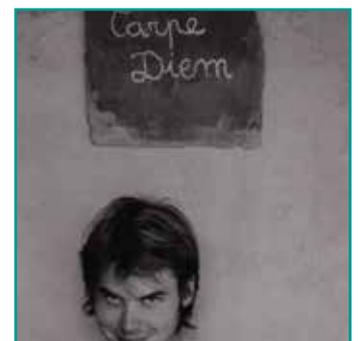
“Chris was loved by so many people and his loss will always be felt by us all. As a family we have struggled to come to terms with losing him, particularly at such a young age and hope that my fundraising has helped in a small way to further research.” *Anika Keynes*



Last outing together as a family to Winter Wonderland in London



Anika with her late brother Christian who tragically passed away from throat cancer at the age of 41



Christian Betz 1977-2018

# Fundraising: *The Spring Dinner*

Following his battle with tongue cancer, President of The Restaurant Association and Founder of The Nth Degree Club, Robert Walton MBE organised a memorable evening at Claridges in London to raise funds for Oracle Cancer Trust.

Over 90 friends, family, business leaders and entrepreneurs joined Robert and his wife, renowned designer Donna Ida in the stunning setting of The French Salon at Claridges in support of Oracle Cancer Trust in May.

During the evening Robert shared his very personal head and neck cancer journey and how the support, love and friendship helped him through twelve months of harrowing treatment for his tongue cancer which was diagnosed in 2017. The gruelling treatment has left Robert with lifelong side-effects resulting in a partial loss of taste and dry mouth, which is very common following radiotherapy and the impact of this devastating disease has had a marked effect on Robert given his high-profile career in the world of fine dining and hospitality. Prof Chris Nutting, one of the world's leading experts on radiotherapy shared how Oracle's vital work has paved the way for newer treatments sparing patients from these often lifelong side-effects.

Says Robert, "2017 was a year that changed my life forever and one that I will never forget. From simple things like not being able to eat certain foods or enjoy a glass of wine, treatment for head and neck cancer affects the senses in a very cruel and physical way. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of family, friends and supporters who attended the dinner and also donated some amazing auction prizes. Such was the success of the evening, I am delighted to announce that we have set a date for Monday 11th May 2020 at Claridges."

Guests were also delighted to hear from Oracle's Patron and renowned author, Sir Michael Morpurgo shared a touching story about love and compassion following a visit with his wife to Lescun in France, the setting for his book "Waiting for Anya" delighting the audience with a traditional folk song from the book. Sir Michael was successfully treated for cancer of the larynx and is now once again enjoying his daily ritual of singing. Over £25,000 was raised on the night with a highly successful live and silent auction which has been matched in a funding programme by The Sir Adrian Swire Pioneers Fund, set up in memory of Sir Adrian Swire bringing the total raised on the night to an incredible £50,000.



Robert Walton MBE with his wife, fashion designer Donna Ida



Guests were treated to a gift of the finest olive oil sold in support of Oracle



Sir Michael and Lady Clare Morpurgo



"Britain's Got Talent" runner up, singer Wayne Woodward entertains



"Heads and Tails" winner Susie Cooke congratulated by runner up Frances Dore



Sir Christopher Lewinton



Prof Chris Nutting speaks about the advances in radiotherapy treatment



Sir Michael Morpurgo brings the room to attention with a wonderful story



ITV weather presenter Lucy Verasamy



Claridges Head Chef Martyn Nail with Robert Walton MBE

**Save the date!**

**Spring Dinner at Claridges  
Monday 11th May 2020**

**To reserve a table or  
individual places please  
email  
[events@oraclecancertrust.org](mailto:events@oraclecancertrust.org)**

# Fundraising superstars

There are so many fundraising superstars in the Oracle Family, going the extra mile to help us fund better and kinder treatments. And some of you enjoy it so much you come back year after year! We're thrilled that Angie Bryant, John Hughes and Katrina Doubleday have once again pulled out all the stops to raise funds for Oracle. They let their hair down and inspire their friends and family to join them, again and again in aid of our work. Thanks so much to you, and everyone who helps us keep head and neck cancer research on the map. Hope to see you again next year!

If you fancy joining them, drop us a line on [events@oraclecancertrust.org](mailto:events@oraclecancertrust.org) or call us for a chat on 020 3875 8991. We'd love to help you bring your fundraising ideas to life.

## Angie Bryant's Masked Ball



Angie Bryant has been fundraising for head and neck cancer following her own diagnosis several years ago, organising an annual ball in West Oxfordshire which is always a sell-out evening. At this year's event Angie raised over £7,000 for Oracle, bringing her total raised in the last two years to just under £14,000.

Angie, pictured left with her parents, is also tackling the Prudential RideLondon this August with a group of friends and has been busy training on her bike with friends on the Oxfordshire hills in preparation for the big day.

## John Hughes Tribute Nights

Super fundraiser John Hughes has been raising money for head and neck cancer research for over 15 years. In that time he has raised an incredible £170,000 devoting his time organising golf days and, more recently tribute nights.

John's Tribute nights are a huge success and previous nights have included acts such as the Bee Gees and Elvis. John's next fundraising tribute night is on Saturday 28th September 2019 with an Abba theme at The Wiltshire Hotel and Golf Club in Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire. Fancy dress is optional but encouraged!

For more information and tickets please visit:  
[www.sharkattackcharitygolf.com/abba-tribute-night/](http://www.sharkattackcharitygolf.com/abba-tribute-night/)



## Katrina's Quiz Nights



Katrina is one of our longest fundraisers and has held many quiz nights in support of Oracle over the years in her local village. Says Katrina,

"I do love organizing a quiz, and so I held another quiz to raise funds and awareness for Oracle, on the 29th March in the village of Slip End. The evening was very well attended and the quizzers were very keen and enthusiastic creating a lively and noisy atmosphere.

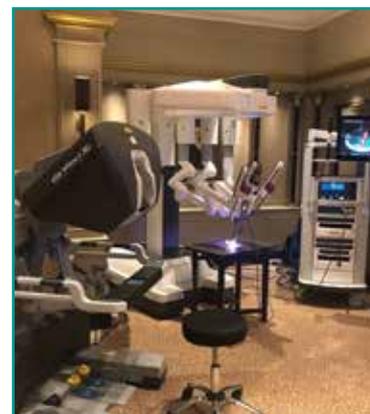
"All of the scores were very close, but the Jim and Tonics were the winners. The amount raised on the evening was £1,100. My partner Phil was successfully treated by Peter Rhys Evans in 2005, and we have seen the charity and the research work develop over the years which is a great inspiration to raise funds for the charity."

# Surgical advances

## Learning all about robot-assisted surgery

We were delighted to participate in the Thoracic and Head & Neck Patient Group Advisory Board recently which was hosted by Intuitive, manufacturers of the da Vinci® surgical system. At the event we heard from experts Sasha Stamenkovic, Director of Robotic Surgery and consultant Thoracic Surgeon from Barts Hospital in London and Prof Vin Paleri, Consultant Head and Neck Surgeon from The Royal Marsden Hospital in London as well as hearing from patients who have undergone surgery with the robot. The event was attended by a small group of charities from the head and neck and lung cancer sectors.

Robotic surgery combined with radiotherapy has recently demonstrated excellent success rates in treating HPV+ oropharyngeal cancers. Oracle is currently funding a pioneering robotic surgery project under the supervision of leading expert Prof Vin Paleri at The Royal Marsden Hospital in London. This 'MOSES trial' is the first research project using robotic-assisted surgery to be funded in the UK.



### Surgery for mouth or throat cancer

Currently for mouth or throat cancer, doctors can use minimally invasive transoral surgery for benign tumours and early stage cancers. These techniques require no incisions, relieving the patient of the many debilitating side effects of traditional surgery such as scarring and tissue damage. Options may include endoscopic, laser microsurgery or robotic-assisted surgery such as with da Vinci®. Prior to these minimally invasive procedures, open surgery was performed on head and neck cancer patients. This required a long incision from the bottom lip down to the middle of the neck and up to the ear, and access to the back of the mouth and throat required surgeons to split open the jaw. These minimally invasive techniques are thus revolutionary and relieve the patient of much physical discomfort including scarring, nerve and tissue damage.



### Your surgeon is in control

It is important to appreciate that by itself the da Vinci® system does not have any control over the surgery and cannot be credited for performing the surgery. Instead, it merely aids the surgeon's expertise by increasing precision and accuracy with the surgeon's guidance of the instruments via a console. The term "robotic" is misleading and does not denote AI technology, and so the technique is often referred to as "robotic assisted surgery".

### How the da Vinci system works

The way a surgeon works the da Vinci system is similar to a teenager playing on a video game, and the system translates the hand movements at the console in real time to the tiny instruments. The instruments are far more precise and accurate with a greater range of motion and any hand shaking is corrected. A highly magnified, 3D high-definition view of the surgical area allows all the surgeons to have exactly the same view which further increases the accuracy of the procedure.

### Benefits of the robotic-assisted surgery and the da Vinci system

Experts at this event reiterated that 'one size does not fit all' and that every patient must be cared for and treated in a way that is most beneficial to them. With a surgeon commencing a surgical procedure every 30 seconds across the world, it is vital that advances in surgery continue to improve patient outcomes. Robotic-assisted surgery not only increases surgery success, but also increases efficiency. For example, a tongue base surgery could be reduced to around 30 minutes compared to three hours without the robot.

### The Patient Perspective

We heard from patients who had gone through surgery, which was extremely moving. Guests Peter and Vivian Sewall shared their cancer journey and how Peter's cancer and surgery had hugely impacted their family life. Peter had received open surgery on his jaw, followed by six weeks of radiotherapy. This open surgery was a 12-hour procedure with around 13 days of hospitalisation. He has scarring, nerve damage and nerve pain, and cannot raise his right arm above his head. Peter's swallowing changed after surgery and radically six weeks later following the radiation. Five years the cancer recurred later as basal tongue cancer and was treated by Prof Vin Paleri with robotic-assisted surgery again followed by radiation therapy. At this time robotic surgery for head and neck cancer was at an embryonic stage but under the expert skill of Prof Vin Paleri, Peter has made a full recovery and attributes this to his surgeon and to that of the robot.

## Fundraise

From taking part in cycle rides and marathons to hosting quiz nights or bake sales, there are lots of fun ways to raise money with friends, family and work colleagues to support our work. Oracle receives no government funding and relies on the generosity of fundraisers to continue its valuable work funding pioneering research projects.

If you have a fundraising idea, do get in touch with [teresa@oraclecancertrust.org](mailto:teresa@oraclecancertrust.org) or visit our website where you can download our fundraising guide as well as other useful tips and resources at [oraclecancertrust.org/fundraise](http://oraclecancertrust.org/fundraise)

## Donate

### Online

You can now make a one-off donation or set up a regular donation directly via our website at [oraclecancertrust.org/donate](http://oraclecancertrust.org/donate)

### Regular Giving - Become an Oracle Friend

By becoming a regular donor you can help ensure that Oracle's research programmes get the funding they need to make advances in finding newer and kinder treatments for head and neck cancer. A direct debit form can be downloaded via Oracle's website at [oraclecancertrust.org/donate](http://oraclecancertrust.org/donate)

### Become a Corporate Partner

Oracle is very keen to create mutually beneficial partnerships with companies who would like to support our pioneering cancer research work, a cause about which everyone can feel passionate. Pledge to fundraise for the charity and in return we can offer you bespoke fundraising support, volunteering opportunities and event invitations. We will work with your organisation to offer dedicated support throughout any partnership activity and keep you up to date with the charity's pioneering research work so that you can understand the impact of your fundraising.

Contact [teresa@oraclecancertrust.org](mailto:teresa@oraclecancertrust.org) for more information or visit [oraclecancertrust.org/fundraise/become-a-corporate-partner](http://oraclecancertrust.org/fundraise/become-a-corporate-partner)

## Take on a challenge in 2019

We have several times of runners joining our remaining challenges in 2019; we still have places at The Oxford Half-Marathon available, do get in touch with us if you are interesting in taking up the challenge at [events@oraclecancertrust.org](mailto:events@oraclecancertrust.org)

### Sunday 13th October 2019 - Royal Parks Half Marathon, London

This run takes in four of London's Royal Parks at their Autumnal best and is a firm favourite with Oracle runners every year.

### Sunday 13th October 2019 - Oxford Half Marathon

We are delighted to have secured places at this popular half-marathon which takes in the stunning sights of Oxford's historic colleges. This is a popular event so please do apply early.



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Leading research into head and neck cancer

