

BREAST COURSE 4 NURSES

February 2024

Below is a brief resume of what we have been up to in 2023 and where we hope to be going in 2024.

Prof Jenny Edge moved from Stellenbosch University to the University of Witwatersrand in 2023 which resulted in some changes for our NPO. Gauteng is a much bigger space and more central which will mean more opportunity and more sustainability of our various programmes.

There are 2 levels of courses that the BCN supports:

- The Breast Care Course (BCC) - this is the advanced accredited course for Registered Nurses. It is being officially moved from Stellenbosch University to the University of Witwatersrand (WITS). The negotiations between the universities have taken most of 2023 and the result will be a changed course with greater capacity to deal with more nurses. It is hoped that the first Wits Health Consortium course will start around June 2024. It is a new course and is designed to accommodate more people and be run more cost-efficiently. It will be a combination of online and in-person. Below is a photo of the first group of nurses that completed the original BCC in 2021.



- The Breast Course for Nurses (BCN) – this is available online, and in-person again. The first Gauteng in-person course was run at the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) in December 2023. There was a lot of interest in the course, and the number had to be capped at 40 healthcare workers. Below is the group of healthcare workers that completed the course at CMJAH.

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The course was primarily used for bridge building, and building relationships:

- between the three academic hospitals in Johannesburg: Baragwanath, Charlotte Maxeke and Helen Joseph
- between the cities: Johannesburg and Pretoria
- between the different allied health professionals: e.g. physiotherapists and genetic counsellors
- between the scientists and the clinicians
- between the different NPO's involved in breast care

Above all, it was aimed at nurses who came from tertiary, secondary, and primary hospitals. As a direct result of that very successful course, a second BCN course for primary nurses was held in Far East Rand in January 2023. This was attended by nurses from over 10 primary clinics and has resulted in the first secondary-level hospital breast clinic being opened in the Gauteng region. The photos below show the group that completed the BCN course at Far East Rand Hospital along with the opening of the breast clinic at Far East Rand Hospital.



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Please note that the colour for the opening was blue: this is a result of the “anti-pink” approach of the BCN. We hope this will be the first of four or five second-level hospitals built on a similar model to follow, and the overall aim will be to get breast provisions taken to rural areas.

The BCN has also been involved with three clinical screening programs. The first was a follow-on program at Green Thread Manufacturers in Cape Town. We visited them some four years ago and conducted a breast education session and breast screening session. The most recent was a follow-up program.

We also did a screening programme at Khayelitsha District Hospital (KDH) and followed it up with a breast screening programme for the nurses at Tygerberg Hospital. As a result of all of these programmes, a successful MMed has been submitted to Stellenbosch University, and a presentation was given to the Surgical Research Society. The findings from the screening programmes will be written up and (hopefully) published in the South African Medical Journal.

Developments in the online space have continued. Our first successful online course for nurses was completed in May 2023. The image below is from the online training including a comment received from one of the students after the course.

“The more healthcare workers are equipped with information, the easier it will be to detect breast conditions at earlier stages, to do appropriate investigations and referrals and to therefore achieve high breast cancer survival rates”



International Collaborations

We collaborated with Rad Aid International and completed an online training tool for navigators which is available on our website and is free to anyone. The collaboration with our American partners has resulted in us publishing an article in the Journal of Radiology Nursing documenting the change in understanding of breast disease amongst those completing the training. 2024 promises further collaboration: Rad Aid have requested that some of their volunteers come and join us for our courses.

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From an organizational point of view, we have changed several things. Sister Ditebogo Mokwena has joined the BCN team and is based in Gauteng. She works intermittently for the BCN and in between she works in the private oncology unit in Pretoria. The nursing sisters from ward 494, CMJAH, have undergone training. Two or three of the sisters have gone on to help us with some of the teaching and development of some of the materials. One of them is hoping to complete her master's degree looking at the impact of our education programme.

The core of our teaching curriculum is based on the book: Breast Care. We updated the book last year. New printers have started printing the book making it cheaper and more accessible. It remains free for anybody to use online. As a result of the Breast Care book, Sister Wegelin and Professor Edge were asked to write a chapter for the soon-to-be-published nursing guide on examination and assessment of breast conditions.

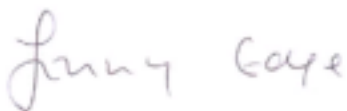
We have a very busy six months ahead of us. Professor Edge has been invited to join the Association of Breast Surgeons (UK) to run an outreach programme in Bulawayo. They have developed their own nursing program but wish to collaborate with us in the development of nursing programs for low- and middle-income countries.

The University of Witwatersrand trains clinical associates. They are health professionals who have a degree in healthcare. They are not qualified nurses and not qualified doctors but are trained to work in primary clinics. We have been invited to embed the principles of the BCN into their core curriculum. This started in January 2024 and will be integrated from this point on into all three years.

The changes the BCN has undergone this year show that it is a sustainable organization. We are responding to changing needs, and we have shown that we can teach online although our core content will continue to be taught face-to-face wherever possible.

On behalf of the patients, who benefit from the work of the Breast Course for Nurses, we thank you.

Yours Sincerely



Professor Jenny Edge on behalf of the Breast Course for Nurses team

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