

inequalities in breast cancer survival worldwide
the people behind the numbers

The exhibition | Lisa Montel, Prof. Michel Coleman, Prof. Claudia Allemani

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
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the project

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The CONCORD programme is the first study on global surveillance of trends in cancer survival. We estimated five-year net survival for 18 cancers among adults and children diagnosed during 2000-2014, using data from 71 countries, covering two thirds of the world population. We published the summary article on CONCORD-3 in *The Lancet* in March 2018¹. This major study revealed huge inequalities worldwide in five-year net survival.

For breast cancer, these inequalities are striking: ranging from 89.5% five-year survival in Australia or 90.2% in the USA to 66.1% in India. These differences show that high survival in breast cancer is achievable if the disease is diagnosed early and treated properly. Women dying from breast cancer today reveal weak cancer care policies and a poor health system in their country.

We met with women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer in Peru, Nigeria, Algeria and Italy. We asked them about their personal experience of having cancer in their country to understand better how they were diagnosed, what support –if any– they received for their treatment, and what technology was available, as well as the impact on their work and personal life. We ended the interview with a photo portrait.

Stories of these women are reported in the exhibition next to their photo portrait, name, age, country of residence and breast cancer survival estimate, taken from the CONCORD-3 analyses. We believe that showing the faces of these women is a powerful illustration of the survival inequalities worldwide.

Read our Perspective published in *The Lancet Oncology*:

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¹ Allemani C, Matsuda T, Di Carlo V, et al. Global surveillance of trends in cancer survival 2000-14 (CONCORD-3): analysis of individual records for 37 513 025 patients diagnosed with one of 18 cancers from 322 population-based registries in 71 countries. *The Lancet* 2018; **391**: 1023-75.

portrait gallery

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portrait gallery

peru

13-15 Nov 2018

2 interviews

Five-year breast cancer survival: 84%
Age-standardised five-year net survival (%) for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Peru during 2010-14 (Allemani et al, The Lancet, 2018)



Photography by: Lisa Montel

aurea

69 years

Peru

Five-year breast
cancer survival:

84%²

EN

In July 2014, Aurea was diagnosed with in situ breast cancer. She immediately underwent surgery to remove the tumour. She has since been suffering from depression.

Aurea has a large extended family and they have been united around her, giving her strength. Her daughters try to hide their fears and worries from their mother. 'This is out of respect for me; to spare me some tears.'

Her ex-husband is a doctor. Thanks to his job, Aurea benefits from a health insurance and does not pay for her treatment or screening; neither did she have to pay for her surgery. Her case is not the norm, as access to treatment in Peru is difficult and she is one of the lucky few being able to take her medicines: 'One day the medicines cost 10 soles, the next day it's 300 soles. There is no explanation for this.' She adds that some medicines are only available in Lima, the capital, and that people who are not able to travel won't have access to most treatments.

Aurea works as a social worker in one of the biggest hospitals in Lima. She hasn't stopped working since she was diagnosed, and loves her job. In her spare time, she enjoys knitting. She used to dance, but unfortunately had to stop because of arthritis and lumbago in her lower back. Above everything else, Aurea is a traveller: the USA, Cuba, Panama, Ecuador... she dreams of going on a cruise in the Caribbean one day. Religion plays a major role in her life, but she does not go to church: 'Some Christians going to church every day are very bad people, the real faith is love to others. I pray at home.'

SP

En Julio de 2014, a Aurea le fue diagnosticado un cáncer de mama in situ. Inmediatamente fue sometida a cirugía para extirpar dicho tumor. A raíz de ello, además, ha sufrido de depresión.

Aurea tiene una familia numerosa que se ha aglomerado a su alrededor, dándole fuerzas. Sus hijas tratan de esconderle los miedos y preocupaciones a su madre. 'Lo hacen por respeto a mi, para ahorrarme un poco de llanto.'

Su ex-marido es médico. Gracias a eso, Aurea ha tenido disponible un seguro medio y no ha tenido que pagar por sus tratamientos o revisiones; así como no tuvo que pagar por su operación. Su caso no es el habitual, dado que el acceso al tratamiento en el Perú es complejo, y ella es de las afortunadas que pueden tomar regularmente su medicina: 'Un día valen 10 soles, al día siguiente valen 300 soles. Y no hay ninguna explicación...' Además, añade, alguno de los medicamentos solo están disponibles en Lima, la capital, y que aquellos sin la capacidad de viajar a por ellas no pueden acceder a estos tratamientos.

Aurea es una trabajadora social en uno de los mayores hospitales de Lima. Ella no ha dejado de trabajar desde su diagnóstico, y ama su trabajo. En su tiempo libre le gusta la costura. Además, solía bailar, pero tuvo que dejarlo a causa de artritis y lumbago. Pero por encima de todo, Aurea es una viajera: los EEUU, Cuba, Panamá, Ecuador... uno de sus sueños es ir en un crucero por el caribe algún día. La religión cumple un papel muy importante en su vida, pero no suele acudir a la iglesia: 'Algunos de los cristianos que van a la iglesia a diario no son buenas personas, la auténtica fe es el amor por los demás. Yo rezo desde casa.'

² Age-standardised five-year net survival (%) for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Peru during 2010-14 (Allemani et al, *The Lancet*, 2018)



Photography by: Lisa Montel

EN

Virginia was diagnosed with breast cancer stage III in her right breast in 2010. She underwent chemotherapy and took hormonal treatment.

Thanks to the newly introduced cancer plan 'Esperanza', Virginia could access her treatment through the Peruvian public health service, the Sistema Integral de Salud. However, after three years, the public hospital in Arequipa stopped providing the medicines. Just like many other cancer patients, Virginia went to see a judge and asked for her right to health to be recognised. She thinks that clinicians and hospital administrators have the erroneous idea that cancer patients will die soon anyway, and that providing free treatment is a waste of public funds.

This interlude in treatment caused Virginia to have recurrence in her cancer, this time on the left breast. She decided to contact the Ministry of Health directly. Whether her emails reached the right person or not, she was in luck. On 23 December 2013, the Ministry of Health decided to provide free breast cancer treatment again. Even then, she still had to pay for some doses herself, for a total of 35,000 soles (US\$ 10,540).

Virginia worked in social communication, but when her employer found out about her cancer he asked her to leave. Her presence in public events and her use of microphones made him afraid of increased risks of tuberculosis infection due to the antibodies she was taking. Today, Virginia has found work for a local newspaper.

Although she comes from a family with a long history of cancer, her first thought when it comes to her own struggle is always the same: 'Why me?' However, it has now been eight years since she was first diagnosed and she has fully accepted the disease as part of herself. She made some changes in her lifestyle, both for financial and health reasons. She now exercises regularly and eats food that is believed in her region to help fight cancer, such as guinea pig soup.

Religion has an important place in her life. She spends most of her time at the church where she feels part of a community. She likes listening to music, taking care of animals and exercising. 'Gracias a Dios' is her favourite song.

virginia

58 years

Peru

Five-year breast

cancer survival:

84%²

SP

A Virginia le fue diagnosticado un cancer de mama de grado III en el seno derecho en 2010. Su tratamiento consistió en quimioterapia y terapia hormonal.

Gracias al plan sobre cancer 'Esperanza', recientemente introducido, Virginia pudo acceder a tratamiento a través del servicio público peruano, el Sistema Integral de Salud. Sin embargo, tras tres años el hospital público de Arequipa dejó de proveer los medicamentos. Como muchos otros pacientes, Virginia acudió a los juzgados para pedir que prevaleciera su derecho a la salud. En su opinión, algunos analistas clínicos y administradores hospitalarios piensan que dado que los pacientes de cancer van a morir a corto plazo de cualquier manera, proporcionarles tratamiento gratuito es un gasto innecesario de fondos públicos.

Esta pausa en su tratamiento le provocó a Virginia una recaída en su cancer, esta vez en el seno izquierdo. Por ello, decidió contactar personalmente con el Ministerio de Salud. Fuese gracias a esto o no, su suerte cambió. El 23 de Diciembre de 2013, el Ministerio de Salud decidió volver a proporcionar tratamiento para el cancer de mama de manera gratuita. Aun así, Virginia tuvo que cubrir parte de las dosis de su bolsillo, hasta un total de 35,000 soles (US\$ 10,540).

Virginia trabajaba como comunicadora social, pero cuando sus jefes descubrieron su enfermedad, le pidieron que dejara el trabajo. Debido a su trabajo en espacios públicos y con microfones, su jefe estaba preocupado acerca de los riesgos de infección por tuberculosis asociados a los anticuerpos que estaba tomando. Ahora trabaja para un periódico local.

Aunque en su familia hay un largo historial de cancer, el primer pensamiento acerca de su cancer es siempre el mismo: '¿Por que yo?' Sin embargo, después de ocho años desde su primer diagnóstico, ha aprendido a aceptar la enfermedad como parte de si misma. Ha hecho algunos cambios en su estilo de vida, tanto por motivos económicos como de salud. Virginia se ejercita regularmente y ha mejorado su dieta, incluyendo alimentos con posibles efectos positivos contra la enfermedad, como la sopa de cuy.

La religion forma una parte muy importante de su vida. Virginia pasa gran parte de su tiempo libre en la iglesia, donde se siente parte de una comunidad. Le gusta la musica, cuidar animales y hacer ejercicio. Su cancion favorita es 'Gracias a Dios'.

² Age-standardised five-year net survival (%) for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Peru during 2010-14 (Allemani et al, *The Lancet*, 2018)

portrait gallery

nigeria

10-13 Dec 2018

3 interviews

Five-year breast cancer survival:

Age-standardised five-year net survival for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Nigeria cannot be estimated because of lack of data.

One woman in Nigeria declined to have her portrait shown publicly. This is indicative of the strong stigma associated with the disease in this country.



Photography by: Lisa Montel

hauwa

44 years
Nigeria
Five-year breast
cancer survival³

EN

Hauwa suffered from breast pain during her fourth pregnancy. Having had three pregnancies in the past, she knew the pain was unusual. Doctors gave her antibiotics. However after three months, the pain intensified. Doctors performed a mammogram but did not see anything abnormal. After six months of continuous pain, Hauwa eventually had a biopsy. She was diagnosed with breast cancer stage II in September 2015. She was immediately given chemotherapy treatment.

Hauwa had to buy her own drugs. She had three rounds of chemotherapy for a total of 180,000 naira (US\$ 500) – 60,000 naira per round. After the chemotherapy, the tumour shrank enough to be able to remove it completely. However, the waiting list for surgery was so long that Hauwa decided to travel to India. She had her operation there followed by radiotherapy treatment – there are only five radiotherapy-equipped locations in Nigeria, the most populated African country. She stayed in India for three months, with her husband by her side. Their four little daughters were looked after by her brother-in-law. Finally, when she came back to Nigeria, she followed another six-month course of chemotherapy treatment. The nightmare ended in 2016.

In total, Hauwa's treatment cost six million naira (US\$ 16,655), of which one million was reimbursed through her work health insurance. She and her husband spent all their savings and they were fortunate enough to rely on family and friends' donations. Hauwa is a banker.

In May 2017, Hauwa funded her own NGO 'Save A Life Cancer Awareness And Support Network' to educate people about cancer of the breast and cancer of the cervix. After work and during weekends, she visits rural communities in Nigeria to fight the stigma associated with the disease: in certain communities, cancer is thought to be a curse or a spiritual punishment. Hauwa encourages women to go to the hospital and seek medical treatment, instead of alternative medicines. She is sometimes accompanied by a volunteer radiologist with an ultrasound machine and together they provide free breast checks, and hospital referrals if required. Hauwa also thinks of the next generation and visits schools to teach young girls about self-examination. Unfortunately, the NGO lacks financial support and the activities are often funded by the volunteers or herself directly.

Since she was diagnosed with cancer, Hauwa appreciates life more. 'This disease is not a curse; it gave me a purpose.' Now that she has her own NGO, Hauwa wants to give hope to women in Nigeria and around the world: cancer is no longer a death sentence and prevention is key. 'My message to all women out there is to check their breasts!'

³ Age-standardised five-year net survival for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Nigeria cannot be estimated because of lack of data.

For the Save A Life Cancer Awareness and Support Network see www.salcasun.com

-
Amimatu
declined
to show
her face
-

amimatu

48 years
Nigeria
Five-year breast
cancer survival³

EN

In January 2008, Amimatu felt a lump on her right breast. Her doctor referred her to the national hospital in Abuja, the capital, where she would be able to get a biopsy. Her friends advised her not to go there because of the high costs associated with the visit. Amimatu decided to get the biopsy done either way. She was diagnosed with breast cancer stage II.

'The news felt like a death sentence' she recalls.

She completed six sessions of chemotherapy treatment to shrink the tumour. Doctors advised her to get surgery to remove it. Amimatu first refused: she had never had any surgery previously and the thought of going to the hospital scared her. After several discussions with her doctor and the push of her late husband, she finally had her tumour removed. She ended her treatment with twenty-one days of chemotherapy. The chemotherapy sessions amounted to 301,521 naira (US\$ 837) in total, paid by her husband - he was an engineer. Her work health insurance paid for the surgery. By December 2008, the cancer had fully gone.

Amimatu has been a breast cancer survivor for more than ten years.

When she thinks of her struggle, Amimatu says that two things saved her: money and faith. She used to be a Muslim, but then converted to Christianity. 'Whatever the religion, I have faith and trust that God helps me.' Amimatu has two young daughters whom she educates on breast cancer. One of them would like to become a doctor.

Her message to all women is to have faith and hope: 'Breast cancer is no longer a death sentence'. She encourages Nigerian women to go to the hospital, at all costs.

³ Age-standardised five-year net survival for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Nigeria cannot be estimated because of lack of data.



juliana

46 years

Nigeria

Five-year breast
cancer survival³

EN

Juliana remembers the scream of her sister when she dared show the lump on her left breast. Both of them had heard of cancer on TV before. 'Ask your husband if you can go to the hospital' she urged. Juliana had a lumpectomy and a biopsy in a local private hospital; she was diagnosed with breast cancer stage III. She was immediately referred to the national hospital in the capital, Abuja, about 200km away from her home.

The quote for Juliana's chemotherapy treatment amounted to more than nine million naira (US\$ 24,983). On top of these costs, she was asked to pay for radiotherapy. She was lucky enough that she did not have to pay for surgery.

She then embarked on a journey to raise funds from every source she could think of: she wrote to the State Governor's wife, the Governor himself, she enquired about support at local NGOs, and of course talked to her own family. She was lucky enough to receive funds from all these sources, but today she still needs about two million naira (US\$ 5,552) to complete her radiotherapy sessions. Only with the funds fully secured will she be able to register for radiotherapy and get her name at the bottom of a long waiting list.

Financial issues are not the only barriers to Juliana's treatment. She also needs to take one or more days off work for each chemotherapy session, since the national hospital is a day away from her hometown. A return journey costs 5,000 naira (US\$ 14). Juliana has a good position: she is a civil servant and earns 82,000 naira (US\$ 228) per month. Travelling to the hospital three times a month costs her about one fifth of her salary.

The biggest change in Juliana's life since she was diagnosed with cancer is the financial burden. She always has faith in God and trusts that her treatment will prolong her life, but she struggles to find money to complete it.

Her message to all governments is to help women to complete the course of their treatment if they are lucky enough to have a chance to get diagnosed.

³ Age-standardised five-year net survival for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Nigeria cannot be estimated because of lack of data.

portrait gallery

algeria

12 Feb 2019

1 interview

Five-year breast cancer survival:

Age-standardised five-year net survival for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Algeria cannot be estimated because of lack of data.

One woman in Algeria declined to have her portrait shown publicly. This is indicative of the strong stigma associated with the disease in this country.

-
Nadia
declined
to show
her face
-

EN

'You have breast cancer.' When the diagnostic fell, Nadia felt helpless. These words haunted her for many nights. Without much information about the disease, Nadia spent most of her nights online, hoping to better understand what was happening to her.

She describes a 'real struggle' since she received the news of her cancer. Opening a file at the university college hospital, registering for a biopsy, calling a private laboratory to gain precious time, trying to get advice from a doctor instead of a radiologist and eventually... understanding that a mastectomy is necessary.

'I shed all the tears I had.' What Nadia regrets the most is not having a psychologist to address the changes, both clinical and personal.

'So with the other women, we did our own group therapy.'

The day before surgery, Nadia was waiting in a hospital room with eight other women. All these women had to undergo the same surgery. Some came from far away; from the south of Algeria. That night, in that room, between these women, something happened: despite the fear, the lack of food and water, these women started laughing. They were kids again, they laughed until their jaws hurt. 'The Head of the Unit had to tell us to stop this mayhem because we had a surgery to prepare for!' The following day, they lay on the surgery table one after the other, taking with them the supporting sights and comforting smiles exchanged in the corridor.

'You have a choice: either let the disease eat you, or fight it. I chose to live.'

Nadia began her daily tasks again so that she would not die: cleaning up, making the bed, shopping for groceries. Carrying a scarf to hide her bald head from her husband, even at night. Hosting parties, talking, smiling. Making a good impression at the neighbour's wedding, and pulling yourself together when you realise that there is no eyelash left to put mascara on.

'You become an artist, a comedian.'

Time spent swimming is perhaps the moment when Nadia feels alive. She used to compete when she was younger. Today, it is her life jewel.

'God threw the disease, but God also knows the remedy.' Nadia finds peace in the Koran. Reciting verses under perfusion, blessing the medicines, having faith. God doesn't punish, He protects us. 'El Hamdoulia.'

nadia

46 years
Algeria
Five-year breast
cancer survival ⁴

FR

« Vous avez un cancer du sein. » Quand le diagnostic est tombé, Nadia s'est sentie livrée à elle-même. Les mots de la radiologue l'ont hantée, au cours de plusieurs nuits. En manque d'information, Nadia passait la plupart de ses nuits sur internet, dans l'espoir de mieux comprendre sa maladie.

Elle décrit un « parcours du combattant » depuis l'annonce de son cancer. Créer un dossier au CHU, s'enregistrer pour une biopsie, passer par un laboratoire privé pour gagner du temps, essayer d'avoir l'avis d'un médecin plutôt que celui d'un radiologue et enfin... comprendre qu'une ablation du sein est nécessaire.

« J'en ai pleuré les larmes de mon corps. » Ce que Nadia regrette le plus est l'absence d'un psychologue pour accompagner les changements, non seulement médicaux mais aussi personnels.

« Alors avec les autres femmes, on s'est fait la thérapie de groupe. »

La veille de son opération, Nadia s'est retrouvée dans une chambre d'hôpital avec huit femmes. Toutes devaient subir la même opération le lendemain. Certaines venaient de très loin ; du sud de l'Algérie. Ce soir-là, dans cette chambre, entre ces femmes, il s'est passé quelque chose : malgré la peur, l'absence de nourriture et d'eau, ces femmes se sont mises à rire. Rire comme des gamines, rire à en pleurer. « Le responsable de service a dû nous dire d'arrêter ce vacarme parce que nous avions une opération ! » Le lendemain elles se sont succédées l'une après l'autre, pour autant elles n'étaient pas seules mais emportaient avec elles les sourires échangés au croisement des portes battantes de la salle d'opération.

« On a le choix : laisser la maladie nous manger, ou la combattre. J'ai choisi de vivre. »

Nadia a repris les petites tâches quotidiennes pour ne pas mourir : faire le ménage, faire le lit, sortir faire des emplettes. Porter un bandana devant le mari pour dissimuler son crâne chauve, même la nuit. Recevoir du monde, parler, sourire. Faire bonne figure au mariage de la voisine, se ressaisir lorsque l'on remarque que les cils ne sont plus là pour les couvrir de mascara.

« On devient des artistes, des comédiens. »

Les temps de natation sont probablement les moments où Nadia se sent le plus vivante. Elle en faisait en compétition dans sa jeunesse. Aujourd'hui, c'est son brin de vie.

« Dieu nous a donné la maladie, mais Dieu a aussi donné le remède. » Nadia trouve la paix dans les versets coraniques. Réciter le Coran sous perfusion, bénir ses cachets, avoir la foi. Dieu ne nous punit pas, Il nous protège. « El Hamdoulia. »

⁴ Age-standardised five-year net survival for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Algeria cannot be estimated because of lack of data.

portrait gallery

italy

3-4 Jul. 2019

4 interviews

Five-year breast cancer survival: 86%
Age-standardised five-year net survival (%) for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Italy during 2010-14 (Allemani et al, The Lancet, 2018)



Photography by: Denise Galdo

rosetta

69 years

Italy

Five-year breast

cancer survival:

86%⁵

EN

In June 2018, Rosetta noticed a small wound with blood on her breast. The wound would open and close with time spent at the beach, but Rosetta spent her summer without any worry. After all, she did not have any family history of breast cancer.

A few months later, in November, her Gynaecologist immediately understood there was a problem. Rosetta had a mammography and biopsy. Twenty days later, she was confirmed she had breast cancer stage III. The tumour was aggressive but, luckily, local. In January 2019, she had a surgery to remove it.

In Italy, public hospitals also offer to re-build the breast. All expenses are taken care of by the public health system. Rosetta says that the Breast Unit has rebuilt her, both physically and mentally.

'No one can imagine how wonderful these people are. They really are a second family.'

During her chemotherapy, if Rosetta had free time, she would spend it with people from the Breast Unit, which is led by Dr [name removed]. There, she felt welcomed by the wonderful collaborators of Arturo Iannelli, Head of the cancer research association "Angela Serra", in Salerno. They are the only persons who can understand what it means to go through cancer, and to finally accept the disease. Rosetta refuses to wear a wig, she proudly shows her bald head.

'This is who I am.'

Dressed with colourful clothes, big jewellery, and shiny make-up, Rosetta tries on a new style every day. She irradiates her joy, she looks fulfilled.

Her friends tell her she is strong, but she corrects them:

'Everyone is strong, you just need to find this power inside you.'

IT

Nel Giugno del 2018, Rosetta notò una piccola ferita con del sangue sul seno. La ferita si apriva e richiudeva durante le giornate passate in spiaggia, ma Rosetta trascorse l'estate senza problemi. Dopotutto, non aveva una storia familiare di tumore al seno.

Trascorsi alcuni mesi, a Novembre, il suo ginecologo si accorse immediatamente che c'era un problema. Rosetta fece una mammografia e una biopsia. Dopo venti giorni ricevette la diagnosi di tumore al seno al terzo stadio. Il tumore era aggressivo ma, fortunatamente, localizzato. A Gennaio 2019 fu rimosso chirurgicamente.

In Italia gli ospedali pubblici offrono la ricostruzione del seno come parte integrante della cura. Le spese sono a carico del sistema sanitario nazionale. Rosetta dice che il reparto di senologia l'ha ricostruita, sia fisicamente che mentalmente.

"Nessuno può immaginare quanto siano meravigliose queste persone. Sono una seconda famiglia."

Se aveva tempo libero durante la chemioterapia, Rosetta lo spendeva con le persone del reparto di senologia, diretto dal Dr [nome rimosso]. Qui, ad accoglierla, vi erano le stupende collaboratrici di Arturo Iannelli, responsabile dell'associazione per la ricerca sul cancro "Angelo Serra", sezione di Salerno. Sono le uniche che possono capire cosa significa affrontare un tumore e, alla fine, accettare la malattia. Rosetta si rifiuta di indossare una parrucca e mostra con orgoglio la sua testa calva.

"Questo è quello che sono."

Vestita con colori sgargianti, con grandi gioielli e con un trucco brillante, Rosetta prova uno stile differente ogni giorno. Irradia gioia e sembra appagata.

Le sue amiche le dicono che è forte, ma lei le corregge:

"Ognuno di noi è forte; devi solo trovare la forza dentro di te."

⁵ Age-standardised five-year net survival (%) for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Italy during 2010-14 (Allemani et al, *The Lancet*, 2018)



Photography by: Denise Galdo

EN

'I take things as they come.'

Seven years ago, Amanda felt a growth on her breast. She did not want to alert her family. After one week, when she noticed that the growth was still there, she showed it to her husband, a medical Doctor.

After a few checks, Amanda was immediately sent to surgery. She was informed that part of her breasts would need to be removed.

'That was a relief!'

Amanda had never managed to get rid of the weight she had put on after her second pregnancy. She was hoping to have some of her breast mass removed. When she woke up with both breasts untouched, she was disappointed!

'I was never afraid. I was excited about the chemotherapy. I could finally be bald in life.'

And she literally shaved her head. Breast cancer opened a door in Amanda's life. From that moment on, she would never be afraid and live life to its fullest. Today Amanda is happy and grateful to be alive. She has a grandson; she spends a lot of time with her family. She admits having one flaw: not to let others see her moments of weakness.

This positivity, Amanda took it from her mother who was also diagnosed with cancer in Zimbabwe. She was a positive person and did not let the disease ruin her life.

'Doctors estimated she had one year left. She lived ten years after her diagnosis.'

Amanda's sister was not as lucky. When she found out she had a growth, she hid it from everyone until it became the size of a tennis ball. She reacted with anger to the disease. One year after her diagnosis, she passed away.

Amanda strongly believes that the disease is a strength. One can choose to let it kill, or to turn it into self-power.

'It was meant to be. This pain is a gift. I enjoy life.'

Amanda has always been this ball of beautiful energy. When she left school in Zimbabwe and in her early years in Italy, she did some modelling.

'Had I not met my husband, there would be no Naomi Campbell. There would be Amanda Bough!'

amanda

53 years

Italy

Five-year breast

cancer survival:

86%⁵

IT

'Prendo le cose come vengono.'

Sette anni fa Amanda sentì un nodulo al seno. Non voleva avvisare la sua famiglia. Dopo una settimana, quando notò che il nodulo era ancora lì, lo mostrò a suo marito, che è un medico.

Dopo alcuni controlli, Amanda fu immediatamente operata. La informarono che una parte del suo seno sarebbe stata rimossa.

'È stato un sollievo!'

Amanda non era mai riuscita a perdere il peso che aveva preso dopo la sua seconda gravidanza. Sperava di rimuovere parte del seno. Quando si svegliò con entrambi i seni intatti, rimase delusa!

'Non ho mai avuto paura. Ero entusiasta di fare la chemioterapia perché avrei potuto provare ad essere calva.'

E si è rasata i capelli. Il cancro al seno ha aperto una porta nella vita di Amanda. Dal momento della diagnosi, non ha mai più avuto paura e ha vissuto la vita al massimo. Oggi Amanda è felice e grata di essere viva. Ha un nipote e trascorre molto tempo con la sua famiglia. Ammette di avere un difetto: non mostrare agli altri i suoi momenti di debolezza.

Amanda ha ereditato tutta questa positività da sua madre, alla quale fu diagnosticato un tumore in Zimbabwe: sua mamma era una persona positiva che non ha mai permesso che la malattia le rovinasse la vita.

'I medici le avevano dato solo un anno di vita. Ha vissuto dieci anni dopo la sua diagnosi.'

La sorella di Amanda non è stata così fortunata. Quando ha scoperto di avere un nodulo, lo ha nascosto a tutti fino a quando non è diventato grande quanto una palla da tennis. Ha reagito con rabbia alla malattia. Un anno dopo la sua diagnosi, è deceduta.

Amanda crede fermamente che la malattia sia un punto di forza. Si può scegliere di lasciarsi uccidere dalla malattia oppure si può scegliere di trasformare la malattia in qualcosa che ti rafforza.

'Questo dolore è un dono. Amo la vita.'

Amanda è sempre stata così piena di energia. Dopo aver terminato la scuola nello Zimbabwe e durante i suoi primi anni in Italia, ha fatto anche la modella.

'Se non avessi incontrato mio marito, non ci sarebbe stata Naomi Campbell. Ci sarebbe stata Amanda Bough!'

⁵ Age-standardised five-year net survival (%) for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Italy during 2010-14 (Allemani et al, *The Lancet*, 2018)



EN

In 2014, Caterina underwent a series of health checks. The Doctor found a tumour on her right breast.

Caterina has a strong family history of cancer. She lost both her parents to cancerous diseases. She mocks this macabre misfortune:

'In my family, it's 'Toto cancro' the National Lottery of Cancer.'

In May 2014, Caterina had a first surgery to remove the tumour. It was quickly followed by a second surgery in July, this time to remove her breast completely. She was relieved; she remembered feeling this breast as a foreign body, as if it wasn't hers. Today, Caterina is still under hormone therapy.

'Cancer changes your point of view in life. It makes you stronger.'

Caterina needed to be twice as strong: her cancer was diagnosed at the same time as she got fired from her job.

'You have nothing. You need to start over.'

She is now part of a consortium of associations. She started to learn ceramics and pottery after her second surgery. Now she teaches persons with disabilities and migrants.

'I wanted to create something.'

Today Caterina is proud to have faced the disease. This experience changed her and she wants to keep the scar on her right breast. Like the Amazons, Caterina has the spirit of a warrior, and she wants to share her story to encourage all women to go through screening.

'And don't worry, if the cancer is here, "a muso duro!"'

caterina

58 years

Italy

Five-year breast

cancer survival:

86%⁵

IT

Caterina ha scoperto il tumore al seno destro quando, nel 2014, si è sottoposta ad una serie di esami medici.

Caterina ha una storia familiare di tumore, avendo perso entrambi i genitori con un cancro. Per sdrammatizzare, dice:

"Nella mia famiglia, eravamo al Totocancro".

A Maggio 2014, Caterina si è sottoposta ad un primo intervento chirurgico per rimuovere la massa. Poi, a Luglio dello stesso anno ha avuto seconda operazione per rimuovere completamente il seno. Dopo la ricostruzione, Caterina si è sentita sollevata: ricorda perché avvertiva il proprio seno come un corpo estraneo, come qualcosa che non fosse realmente suo. Oggi Caterina sta ancora ricevendo una terapia ormonale.

"Il tumore cambia il punto di vista in cui vedi la vita. Ti rende più forte."

Caterina però ha dovuto essere forte il doppio; la sua diagnosi è avvenuta nello stesso periodo in cui ha perso il lavoro.

"Non ti rimane più nulla. Devi ricominciare da zero."

Ora Caterina fa parte di un gruppo di associazioni e ha cominciato a frequentare corsi di ceramica dopo la seconda operazione. Adesso insegna le tecniche che ha appreso a persone con disabilità e migranti.

"Ho voluto creare qualcosa."

Oggi Caterina è orgogliosa di aver affrontato la malattia. Questa esperienza l'ha cambiata e vuole conservare la cicatrice sul suo seno destro. Donna vera, guerriera nello spirito, vuole condividere la sua storia per incoraggiare tutte le donne a sottoporsi allo screening.

"E non vi preoccupate, se il cancro arriva, si affronta a muso duro!"

⁵ Age-standardised five-year net survival (%) for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Italy during 2010-14 (Allemani et al, *The Lancet*, 2018)



Photography by: Denise Galdo

rosa

Italy
Five-year breast
cancer survival:
86%⁵

EN

Rosa woke up one morning of 2015 feeling a nodule on her breast. The fact that her sister had been diagnosed with cancer a year earlier, as well as her professional experience as a Pathologist prompted her to seek medical advice as early as possible.

She saw a Doctor who examined her breast and recommended a biopsy. She did her own pathology test. In the lab, she faced reality: she had breast cancer stage III.

She underwent a surgery to remove the tumour and had chemotherapy sessions for about a year. During her chemotherapy, Rosa chose to remain strong; despite her hair falling, she refused to wear a wig.

‘With three children at home, there is no space for lamentation. Wearing a wig wouldn’t be me. Cancer was part of me and I had to accept it.’

She wore a scarf and continued to show up at work every day. Rosa knew that breast cancer is a treatable disease and she refused to put her life on hold for it. After three and a half years since her diagnosis, Rosa feels serene.

Her experience both as a medical expert and as a woman having been diagnosed with breast cancer puts her closer to her patients. She passes on to them her love for life.

‘We are all women, we are all equal in the disease, whether we have scientific knowledge or not.’

IT

Al suo risveglio, un mattino del 2015, Rosa avvertì un nodulo al seno. Visto che a sua sorella era stato diagnosticato un tumore un anno prima e data la sua esperienza professionale da patologa, Rosa richiese un consulto medico il prima possibile.

Un dottore esaminò il seno e le consigliò una biopsia. Rosa effettuò da sé l'esame patologico e in laboratorio affrontò la realtà: aveva un tumore al seno al terzo stadio.

Le fu asportato il tumore e si sottopose a sedute di chemioterapia per circa un anno. Durante la chemioterapia, Rosa decise di essere forte; nonostante la caduta dei capelli, si rifiutò di indossare una parrucca.

“Non c’è spazio per lamentarsi, con tre figli a casa. Se avessi indossato la parrucca, non sarei stata io. Il tumore era una parte di me, e dovevo accettarlo.”

Indossò un foulard e continuò a presentarsi a lavoro ogni giorno. Rosa sapeva che il tumore al seno è un tumore che può essere curato e si rifiutò di mettere la sua vita in stand-by. Dopo circa tre anni e mezzo dalla diagnosi iniziale, Rosa si sente serena.

La sua esperienza medica professionale e di donna che ha affrontato una diagnosi di tumore al seno l'hanno avvicinata alle sue pazienti. A loro trasferisce il suo amore per la vita.

“Siamo tutte donne, non ci sono differenze nella malattia, che si abbiano o meno conoscenze scientifiche”.

⁵ Age-standardised five-year net survival (%) for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Italy during 2010-14 (Allemani et al, *The Lancet*, 2018)

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**In memory of Amanda Prudence Bough
(Nov 10, 1966, to July 11, 2022).**



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