

Your Future Self Will Thank You

Having regular skin checks has been a lifesaver for 28 year-old Danielle King from Auckland.

Danielle, who has Irish heritage and fair skin, started having regular skin checks with a specialist when she was 22 years old. There was no family history of melanoma (though an aunt has recently been diagnosed with melanoma) but television advertising warning about skin cancer made Danielle aware her fair skin put her at higher risk.

"Summers were baking hot when I was growing up and it took a few really bad burns to make me understand my skin just doesn't tan. Tanned skin was seen as more attractive, and it took me a while to embrace my fair skin colour. Plus, I now realise that all tanning is damaging your DNA, no matter what your complexion. At some point the cerebral cortex kicked in."

A few years ago, Danielle noticed a new mole on her back which was monitored by her specialist during her regular checks.

"At first, it seemed harmless and it looked healthy. Life got busy, and I ended up delaying my last check by a few months due to travel and rising living costs."

During that later specialist visit, her doctor pointed out that the mole had developed some suspicious features and recommended a biopsy.

"Even though I was a bit stunned, I followed her advice right away. When the results came back, it was a mix of shock and relief. The biopsy showed melanoma in situ; the mole had become melanoma."

Danielle was relieved the melanoma was picked up at an early stage and that surgery has removed all the melanoma.

"I was 28 and had melanoma, but I was going to be okay. I had another small surgery to remove any remaining melanoma, and now I'm all good."

Danielle is passionate about encouraging education and early detection so that more people can avoid invasive surgery. She says many people don't understand the complexity of melanoma treatment and think it's simply a matter of having a bad mole removed.

"I have a scar on my back but it could have been a lot worse."

Anxiety may prevent some people seeking skin checks and Danielle says having regular skin checks did cause her some stress - but it's important to overcome that.

"Now I am thanking my future self that I had those checks and got that early diagnosis. That's what I tell young people - your future self will thank you."

I am truly grateful for the life-saving technology and specialists who ultimately saved my life."

She describes herself as the "skin cancer advocate friend" - the person who raises awareness about the need to be smart in the sun.

"I have always been the friend sitting in the shade at the beach under an umbrella and covered with a towel and sunscreen. Taking all those precautions didn't make me immune to melanoma, but it gave me a success story against the deadliest skin cancer."

"I want to share my story so that more people, especially young people, act on their intention to get their skin checked," she says.



Danielle King

"I have a scar on my back but it could have been a lot worse."





Melanoma New Zealand Partner and Supporter Events

Protecting and checking your skin is important at all times of the year – not just summer – and it's been a very busy few months for our Nurses Sue, Jade, and Gill, who have been out and about in the Melanoma New Zealand van and pop-up pod (pictured), offering free spot checks and melanoma education in the community. Melanoma New Zealand is delighted to have collaborated with a number of our partners and supporters at events around the country:

- La Roche-Posay Winter Skin Check Pop Up in central Queenstown at the end of August, a key time to share the important message of year-round UV protection in this winter playground.
- FMG Spot Check Roadie events hosted in Cambridge, Hamilton, Hastings, Hinuera and Napier, reaching many rural New Zealanders.
- CARTERS Building Supplies have hosted 11 Tradie Breakfast events throughout the country where our Nurses have provided spot checks and melanoma education to tradies at a convenient time and place for them.
- Burnsco hosted free spot check and melanoma education events around the Auckland region for customers who are out in the elements.
- Just Cuts Hornby in Christchurch hosted a free spot check and melanoma education event outside their store at The Hub; a great fit given their stylists are so well-placed to notice any suspicious spots on their clients' scalps.

Melanoma New Zealand has also provided spot check events at the Auckland Botanic Gardens, Cornwall Park in Epsom, Papakura Marae and Te Atatū Peninsula Library in the last few months.

Melanoma New Zealand is extremely grateful for the support from each of our partners and supporters, helping us to ensure we reach even more New Zealanders with our prevention and detection messages, and patient care.

Melanoma Awareness Month

Throughout October our nurses are delivering free skin cancer spot checks and education in centres around the country, as part of Melanoma Awareness Month. Our goal is to raise awareness about how to be sun smart, how to check your own skin and having checks by health care practitioners, particularly if you're at higher risk. This nationwide spot check drive is being run in partnership with our sun-safe sponsor La Roche-Posay, as part of its campaign "Your Skin Remembers", which shares the impactful message that harmful UV exposure adds up over time.

Information about locations and dates are on Melanoma New Zealand's website - <https://melanoma.org.nz/get-involved/awareness-month/>. Although spot checks are a great way to engage in conversation about skin health, they are not a full body check, and a diagnosis is not provided. Regular full body skin checks by a GP, nurse, dermatologist, surgeon, or plastic surgeon are still recommended. Plus, our skilled Nurse Educators offer free online and telephone consultations to anyone concerned about melanoma wanting advice, support, and links to other services.





Slip



Slop



Slap



Seek



Slide

For more information go to melanoma.org.nz

Message From Our Chief Executive

Welcome to the Spring issue of *Spot News*.

You may recall the June announcement that Pharmac will receive an extra \$604 million over the next four years towards an estimated 54 drugs - 26 of which are for cancer. National had previously committed to funding 13 new cancer drugs, but six of those (including treatments for melanoma) were not included in the announcement and will now be replaced by alternative drugs that are either "as good or better".

A Pharmac funding boost is significant and positive, but the announcement has led to uncertainty for many melanoma patients in New Zealand. Those melanoma patients who relied on the earlier promise of their drugs being funded may miss out, and all melanoma patients are still in the dark as to what treatments will be funded and when.

Over the past few months, we have continued to advocate on behalf of melanoma patients and had constructive meetings with key stakeholders on this critical issue. At the time of going to print, we are still seeking clarity about access to the drugs melanoma patients urgently need.

Meanwhile our family of supporters has been growing and deepening - and we feel extremely grateful to have such amazing support.

This support enables us to deliver even more for our cause around New Zealand, making sure we can reach as many people as possible with our prevention and detection messages, to offer patient support, to fund research, and to keep our advocacy efforts going.

For example, support enables us to:

- be on the road with our nurses providing education and free skin cancer spot checks. Since 2021, we have conducted more than 16,214 spot checks and found 1648 suspicious lesions, including 423 melanomas.
- create a new Counsellor role to set up much-needed patient support groups, one-on-one counselling and peer matching. The Melanoma New Zealand Counselling Service will be launched shortly and on page 5 of this newsletter you will be introduced to our Counsellor, Shireen Garrett.
- engage with politicians and Pharmac regarding access to melanoma drugs. Your collective support makes this work possible.

Please also check out page 2 to read more about our collaboration with La Roche-Posay as part of Melanoma Awareness Month. This October, we will be hosting nine spot check events over four Friday-Sunday weekends in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. These activities have been made possible by the generous support of our sponsor La Roche-Posay, and will run alongside La Roche-Posay's campaign, 'Your Skin Remembers'.

Our awareness-raising efforts are greatly enhanced by individuals who are willing to share their own personal experiences to help others. I would like to thank Danielle King for showing her support by sharing her story in this issue of *Spot News*. Danielle is a keen advocate for young people covering up and checking their skin - an important audience for us to reach, because UV radiation exposure during a person's first 18 years of life is the most critical for cancer-causing skin damage, and melanoma is the fourth most common cancer among people aged 25 to 39 years in New Zealand.

The voices of those experiencing melanoma are at the centre of all we do, and it is always a privilege to have their involvement in our activities. As such, we will soon be establishing Melanoma New Zealand's Patient Advisory Group. Made up of volunteers, this group will work closely with Melanoma New Zealand to represent the interests, perspectives and needs of melanoma patients as well as help with promoting prevention and early detection messages. Establishing this group will help Melanoma New Zealand continue to build on its work, adding new perspectives and connections. Please contact us if you are interested in finding out more about Melanoma New Zealand's Patient Advisory Group.

Once again, thank you to patients, our corporate partners, patrons, ambassadors, donors, fundraisers, grant providers and volunteers who continue to support our cause and make Melanoma New Zealand's efforts across the country possible.

Andrea Newland
Chief Executive
Melanoma
New Zealand





Melanoma New Zealand Fundraiser – Gibbs Farm

Once again, Gibbs Farm has kindly provided us access to its stunning property for an unforgettable day held in support of Melanoma New Zealand.

Please join us on Friday, 22 November, at the celebrated Gibbs Farm – an expansive open-air sculpture park in the beautiful Kaipara Harbour, north of Auckland. It houses the country's greatest collection of large-scale outdoor sculptures, with works by some of the world's most renowned artists, including Andy Goldsworthy, Anish Kapoor and Richard Serra.

Our Nurse Educator will also provide skin cancer spot checks on the day.

Tickets are strictly limited and typically sell out quickly – for more information and to purchase tickets please visit

<https://events.humanitix.com/gibbs-farm-sculpture-park-melanoma-new-zealand-fundraiser>.

About Gibbs Farm: Gibbs Farm is a private property open by appointment only. There is no entry fee applicable when visiting Gibbs Farm. There are large lakes and ponds that will require supervision with children (if applicable), as will encounters with various animals at several locations on the property. Visitors agree to the terms of access as outlined by Gibbs Farm – <https://tinyurl.com/cvnuhdd>. For more information, please visit gibbsfarm.org.nz.

Thank You For Your Feedback

The team at Melanoma New Zealand loves receiving feedback like the message below from a patient who had a spot check by our Nurse.

“ Please pass on my thanks and gratitude to your awesome mobile team. Today I attended the free spot check event at Burnsco Westhaven as I had a small lump on my neck which I was a bit concerned about. The nurse identified that the area was of concern and provided some great advice. I made an appointment with a skin care specialist who confirmed the area was of concern, and I am booked in to have the spot removed shortly. I feel relieved that I have a plan in place and I am grateful for the prompt and great attention from the Melanoma New Zealand Nurse and mobile team. Nice work and thanks for the great and important service. ”



Welcome To Shireen

In July, Shireen Garrett joined the Melanoma New Zealand team as our new Counsellor, and since then she has been laying the foundations for the Melanoma New Zealand Counselling Service which will be launched shortly.

We conducted a survey of 108 past and present patients which confirmed the need was great – for example, 60% of those who responded said anxiety is the main symptom of their melanoma diagnosis. About 74% said they experienced high levels of fear about the disease progressing.

The Melanoma New Zealand Counselling Service will provide online and in-person support groups, a one-to-one counselling service and peer-matching services (where, with permission, we can connect patients with each other directly, as part of our new patient support initiative).

“Being entrusted with people’s stories and holding space for them while they navigate their concerns is an absolute privilege. I’m enjoying being part of the fabulous team, creating and growing

the role to support all people who are experiencing their own, or a loved one’s, melanoma journey.”

Shireen holds a Bachelor of Education, Certificate in Business Management and has completed postgraduate studies in Counselling. With 20 years’ experience in counselling, teaching and facilitation, Shireen has also held various roles within the health industry. “I am guided by strong values of collaboration and integrity in my work and strive to provide the best possible support to those I work with.”

Shireen will also be the primary liaison for Melanoma New Zealand’s soon to be established Patient Advocacy Advisory Group. She will also facilitate access to other health professionals, agencies and support services.

In her personal life, Shireen has three wonderful adult children and loves creating mixed media art. “It’s very therapeutic and great for work and life balance.” Shireen also enjoys volunteer work, getting out into nature, practising yoga and spending time with friends and family.

We look forward to the launch of the Melanoma New Zealand Counselling Service and being able to offer New Zealanders an even more comprehensive melanoma patient support service. Be sure to keep an eye on the Melanoma New Zealand website and social media pages for details.



A Donor Perspective

Karen Kemsley started donating to Melanoma New Zealand about ten years ago after the death of her husband Bruce.

Bruce died from metastatic melanoma in 2013 and Karen says Melanoma New Zealand was one of the couple's main sources of support and information after his diagnosis.

In 2009, Bruce had a melanoma removed from his shoulder. Three years later, he went to the doctor with persistent headaches and was diagnosed with metastatic melanoma, with tumours affecting the brain.

Bruce, who loved the outdoors and hunting, was diagnosed in October 2012, and died in December 2013 at the age of 48.

At that time, Karen says it was very hard to find doctors who had in-depth knowledge about metastatic melanoma and the couple struggled to find information.

"Melanoma New Zealand understood our situation and provided information. They talked to us, gave advice, and also informed us about clinical trials. We felt supported by them."

Karen says patients and their families need someone to walk with them, suggesting questions they could be asking about treatments and alternatives.

"The impact of a melanoma diagnosis is huge - there's more knowledge out there now but my donations were motivated by that need for patient advocacy."

Karen says with better funding Melanoma New Zealand has huge potential to help more people.

"It's clear that Melanoma New Zealand's fundraising efforts and sponsorship have grown, allowing them to offer more services and support."

"My regular donations play a small part in helping that."

"I hope my financial contribution will make a difference to others," she says.



Will You Help Save A Life?

Every donation we receive from you, our wonderful donors, goes towards supporting the urgent work we do at Melanoma New Zealand to help save lives. Tragically, we lose too many of our loved ones to this terrible disease, and yet if caught and treated early, melanoma is nearly always curable.

To try to turn around New Zealand's terrible statistics, we need to fight for better funding, as well as fund research and reach as many people as we can with our life saving messages about the vital importance of both staying safe in the sun and getting regular skin checks.

Your generous support enables us to get the message out into the community. Will you help save a life? No donation is too small, and we are very grateful for any support you can provide.



www.melanoma.org.nz/donate or **phone 0800 463 526.**

Thanks to our supporters.

LA ROCHE POSAY
LABORATOIRE DERMATOLOGIQUE

FMG
Advice & Insurance

CARTERS
Your Building Partner

R&R

SCG

Lidgard
Shades

justcuts

MSD
INVENTING FOR LIFE

BURNSCO

Simpson Grierison

FIFE
FOUNDATION

Lynn Stratford

douglas
charitable trust

Gilltrap Group

Yachting New Zealand