



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Successful management of menopause and cancer

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A specialised clinic established in Perth to help manage the combined health issues of cancer and menopause has been so successful in its dedicated approach to such patients that health authorities in other Australian states, the UK and the US are now in the process of replicating the model.

Established by Professor Christobel Saunders, Professor of Surgical Oncology at the University of Western Australia, the clinic provides women with a tailored management plan to help reduce the often severe symptoms associated with menopause and cancer treatment.

Known as the Menopausal Symptoms After Cancer (MSAC) service, the clinic is staffed by gynaecologists and specialist nurses and is supported by multidisciplinary input from breast surgeons, an endocrinologist, oncologists, a psychiatrist, clinical psychologists, a physiotherapist, genetic counsellors, a dietician and researchers.

“The symptoms of menopause are a very common problem for women with breast and gynaecological cancers not only because they can happen at around the same time but also because certain cancer treatments can exacerbate menopausal symptoms or speed up its onset,” Professor Saunders said.

“However there has long been a gap in dealing with these issues in that oncologists know about cancer but not menopause, and GPs and gynaecologists know about menopause but not how treatments may interact with cancer therapy.

“Menopausal symptoms can be very severe for these patients, from night sweats to depression, sleeplessness and bone loss, affecting their quality of life to such a degree that some are tempted to stop taking their cancer medication.

“At this clinic each woman receives a personalised care plan to reduce those symptoms while it also provides us with an amazing avenue for further research.”

Professor Saunders will be discussing the success of the clinic and the optimum design model at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons’ Annual Scientific Congress which runs from 4-7 May. Nearly 2000 delegates are expected to attend the Congress, being held at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre. The ASC program is available online at www.surgeons.org

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