

# primary focus

Putting Women First

page 4



## *what's inside*

- + Endometrial cancer is a wake up call for women
- + New technology for breast cancer surgery
- + Mater launches podcast by clinicians for clinicians

## In this issue

03

Chief Medical  
Officer Message

04

Prevalence of  
endometrial cancer

06

Same day surgery for  
women with cancer

07

Clinical trials for  
breast cancer  
patients

08

International  
Women's Day  
Fun Run

11

Minimally invasive  
hysterectomies

12

Exercise during  
treatment recovery

14

Perinatal mental  
healthcare

15

sMater, a podcast by  
clinicians for clinicians

16

Our Mater network

putting  
**women**  
first

## Women's Health

This issue coincides with Mater's public education drive, *Putting Women First*, to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of breast and gynaecological cancers. Mater has a long history of caring for women, beginning when the Sisters of Mercy arrived in Brisbane in the 1860s and continuing with the cutting-edge research and treatments delivered today. *Putting Women First* is designed to drive all Queensland women to prioritise their health and seek medical attention at the first warning sign.

### Reconciliation

In the spirit of reconciliation, Mater acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.


 Learn more about our Reconciliation Action Plan at [mater.org.au/rap](https://mater.org.au/rap)

### Limitation of liability

Mater accepts no liability for any errors, omissions or consequences, including any loss or damage, arising from reliance on information in this publication.

We recommend obtaining professional medical advice from an accredited practitioner before relying on the information in this publication.

 Printed on recycled paper.

 Advertising queries to [marketing@mater.org.au](mailto:marketing@mater.org.au)

## Welcome to a new edition of Mater's magazine *for the medical community*

### **We have started 2024 with a public awareness campaign on women's health and wellbeing, highlighting signs and symptoms of gynaecological and breast cancers and encouraging female patients to seek medical advice early.**

For more than a century Mater has been caring for Queensland women.

This tradition started in 1861 when the Sisters of Mercy arrived in Brisbane to bring healing and compassion to young women and the broader community of the fledgling colony.

It was on this foundation that Mater was built, and our commitment to caring for women has never wavered.

Today, our collective expertise spans health, education and research, contributing to Mater delivering Australia's largest maternity service, and being a leading provider of gynaecology, gynae-oncology and breast cancer services in Queensland.

This edition shines a spotlight on a spectrum of treatments and research from minimally invasive techniques that help gynaecological cancer patients return home on the same day as surgery, to improved epithelial ovarian cancer survival rates through novel chemotherapy technology and clinical trials developing new breast and ovarian cancer treatments.

You can also find out more about the latest diagnostic tools, treatments, outcomes and research on sMater—a podcast created by clinicians for clinicians.

Mater's ongoing dedication to improving research, treatments, technology and support services for women with breast cancer is demonstrated each year with Mater's International Women's Day Fun Run, to be held in March.

More than 20,000 people don hot pink T-shirts for the iconic Brisbane event, raising funds for vital equipment, research and support services.

Mater's continued focus on improving the health and wellbeing of women has led to groundbreaking research, treatments, technologies and services.

It is fitting then, that this edition celebrates the 12-month anniversary of Catherine's House for Mothers, Babies and Families, Queensland's first integrated perinatal mental healthcare service—a dedicated space for mothers and families experiencing depression, anxiety and other mental health challenges after the arrival of a new baby.

We know there is always more to do, and Mater remains committed to continuing to prioritise healthcare and patient outcomes for women across Queensland.

I encourage you to learn more about Mater's healthcare services for women, and the exceptional health professionals who provide them, in the pages ahead.



*Mike Beckmann*

A/Prof Mike Beckmann  
Chief Medical Officer

## Experience 'Bundle of Joy'

Having a baby is an exciting time, but we also know it can be expensive. The Bundle of Joy provides price certainty and value for money by bundling together Mater services and additional costs associated with giving birth.

The card is priced at \$490 and includes discounts on services such as carparking, partner meals, ultrasounds, parenting classes and more.





## Mater doctor delivers wake up call for *women's cancer*

Endometrial cancer in post-menopausal women is the most common gynaecological cancer treated at Mater Hospital Brisbane, and one specialist is on a mission to raise awareness.



Dr Nimithri Cabraal said these cancers developed as a result of changes to the cells in the lining of the uterus, with metabolic syndrome and obesity major risk factors.

"This is thought to be due to oestrogen exogenously produced in adipose tissue acting on the endometrium," she said.

**We know that having a Body Mass Index (BMI) over 30 increases your risk of endometrial cancer up to six times, compared with someone who has a BMI in the normal range.**

### Signs and symptoms of endometrial cancer:

- ✓ Any bleeding in post-menopausal women.
- ✓ Persistent or abnormal bleeding in younger women.
- ✓ Discharge or pain in the pelvic area.
- ✓ Blood in urine.

"Therefore, abnormal bleeding in pre-menopause or any bleeding after menopause in women living with obesity should be investigated promptly."

Dr Cabraal said endometrial cancer should serve as a wake-up call for women and used to optimise other aspects of their health after treatment.

"This type of cancer is highly curable, usually with surgery alone," she said. "However, it often arises in women living with other obesity related diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol or heart issues. And it is these diseases that are more likely to result in death within five years of cancer treatment rather than the cancer itself."

Dr Cabraal's message is part of Mater's public awareness campaign, Putting Women First, which aims to improve understanding about the signs and symptoms of gynaecological and breast cancers and to encourage women to seek medical attention early.

A Gynaecological Oncologist, Dr Cabraal said while endometrial cancer was common amongst post menopausal women, it could also develop in younger patients.

**Image** Dr Nimithri Cabraal is on a mission to raise awareness of the warning signs of endometrial cancer in post-menopausal women which is highly treatable with early detection.

**"About 70 per cent of patients are picked up in the early stage and have lower grade tumours that are more curable," she said.**

"Usually, surgery is straightforward and uncomplicated, but it's about women recognising symptoms that need further investigation."

Dr Cabraal said treatment options included surgery (such as hysterectomy), radiotherapy, chemotherapy and hormone therapy. In younger women still desiring fertility there were options to trial hormonal treatment with close monitoring.

### ? How to refer

**Dr Nimithri Cabraal**  
Specialty: Gynaecological Oncology

📍 Mater Private Hospital Brisbane  
Mater Medical Centre  
South Brisbane

☎ 07 3844 9932

➔ [Referral information](#)

## Backpacking trip became a cancer journey for Tora

**When 24-year-old Tora Murphy fell ill in Colombia, she thought she might have food poisoning or a parasitic infection.**

Ovarian cancer never crossed her mind. But today she is halfway through treatment for stage 3 ovarian cancer at Mater Hospital Brisbane after flying back to Australia from the UK.

The average age of an ovarian cancer patient is 64 and Ms Murphy is currently one of the youngest patients being treated for the disease at Mater.

"I'd felt bloated for about a month, but I put it down to travelling, drinking and eating new foods," Ms Murphy said.

"I thought I might have a parasite, but I held off seeing a doctor until we reached London.

"As soon as we arrived I went to a hospital. I was expecting to get a pill and be on my way—but they told me they had found cancer.

"I was in shock for a long time and sometimes it still doesn't feel real."

Doctors considered all options for preserving Ms Murphy's fertility before she underwent surgery for a rare mucinous (mucin is the main component of mucus) ovarian cancer, but ultimately decided a full hysterectomy and removal of both her ovaries was unavoidable.

Ms Murphy, of Albion, Brisbane, has responded well to surgery and chemotherapy, but knows the chance of recurrence is high.



Mater is one of only three hospitals in Queensland treating around 130 ovarian cancer patients a year—just under half of the state's total new annual cases.

Dr Catherine Shannon, Senior Medical Oncologist at the Mater Cancer Care Centre, said Tora's cancer was unusual.

**"Although ovarian cancer is largely a disease of older women, it's important for all women to know the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer," Dr Shannon said.**

**Image** Mater Hospital Brisbane patient 24-year-old Tora Murphy was in shock when she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, a disease she thought only affected older women.

### Signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer

- ✓ Commonly diagnosed over the age of 50 but can occur at any age.
- ✓ No available screening test so cases are usually advanced when detected.
- ✓ Symptoms include persistent bloating, abdominal distension, constipation, diarrhoea, frequent urination, menstrual irregularities and pelvic, back and abdominal pain.

## Program gets women *well after cancer*

**Surviving cancer is always a huge relief for patients—but it often marks the start of a new series of health challenges.**

That's why Mater is set to launch the RECENTRE e-health program later this year for women who have survived breast and gynaecological cancers.

The program will be available free for more than 800 patients across the state, including those treated at Mater hospitals in South East Queensland, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton and Bundaberg.

The health and lifestyle intervention will aim to address the most common health problems experienced after active cancer treatment ends.

"We're great at focusing on women's cancer treatment, but once this ends survivors face many problems which stem from treatment," said Mater Breast Care Nurse Ash Mondolo.

"Patients can gain weight from inactivity, experience chemo-induced menopause and suffer depression and anxiety linked to body image issues and fears of their own mortality."

The Enhancing Women's Recovery after Cancer Treatment Program (RECENTRE) is being launched with support from Mater Foundation and \$1.3m funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council.

**The e-health program will guide participants through selected modules covering issues such as nutrition, sleep, stress and menopause over 12 weeks.**

The program will flag serious or emerging concerns to health professionals and will also link cancer survivors to one another through a peer support connection space.



# Same day surgery for women's cancer

**Advances in minimally invasive surgery have enabled Mater Private Hospital Brisbane (MPHB) to launch a Queensland-first trial that will see gynaecological cancer patients discharged on the same day as surgery.**

MPHB Gynaecological Oncologist Dr Naven Chetty said the trial was enabled by Mater's long-held commitment to investing in minimally invasive surgery techniques, including laparoscopic and robotic assisted surgeries.

"The types of benefits we are talking about include smaller incisions, less pain, less bleeding, less potential for post-operative complications and patients that are mobile immediately after surgery," Dr Chetty said.

MPHB was recently accredited as a Centre of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Surgery by the internationally-recognised SRC agency.

Dr Chetty said the accreditation reflected Mater's dedication to high quality patient care and delivering the best possible outcome every time.

It is this level of patient care, he said, that made the trial possible in the first place.

"We will carefully select low-risk gynaecological cancer patients for the trial who would normally stay overnight after minimally invasive surgery, and provide them with the support they need to go home the same day as surgery.

"Patients can recover in their own homes where they are most comfortable."

Dr Chetty said dedicated support staff will be on call if patients have questions or require support, along with an automatically scheduled telehealth call from a nurse the day after surgery.

**"The beds they vacate are then available for other gynaecological cancer patients requiring a higher level of care, so it really is win, win," he said.**

Dr Chetty said Mater's specialists also valued knowledge-sharing to enhance patient outcomes.

"We have regular meetings with the anaesthetic doctors, the intensive care doctors, and the perioperative doctors as well as the medical oncology, radiation oncology and pathology teams," he said.

"All of that means we are consistently taking the best advice from across Mater to ensure we offer the best possible level of care to our patients."

**Image** Mater Private Hospital Brisbane Gynaecological Oncologist Dr Naven Chetty is part of the team trialling same-day discharge of gynaecological cancer patients, thanks to advances in minimally invasive surgery.



## ? How to refer

**Dr Naven Chetty**  
Specialty: Gynaecological Oncology

 Mater Private Hospital Brisbane  
Mater Medical Centre  
South Brisbane

 07 3010 5788

 [Referral information](#)

## Patient eligibility for trial includes:

- ✔ No significant co-morbidities.
- ✔ Adequate support during recovery.
- ✔ Medium to high level of pre-operative pain.
- ✔ Tolerance to oral medications.
- ✔ High level of motivation.



## Clinical trials give Queensland breast cancer patients hope

When Monique Perry was diagnosed with aggressive triple-negative breast cancer she feared her family history was about to repeat itself.



### Participation in trials enable:

- ✔ Patient access to novel treatments.
- ✔ Inclusion of different types of patients.
- ✔ Inclusion of patients at different stages of the disease.

Her mother had been just 53 when she died from ovarian cancer.

But despite frightening odds, the 43-year-old is cancer-free after participating in an early-phase Mater Research clinical trial of a new cancer drug run.

Mrs Perry, of Anduramba, west of Brisbane, is telling her story to highlight the importance of breast cancer screening, research and clinical trials.

Mater Research is running three clinical trials for triple-negative breast cancer patients with the Mater Cancer Care Centre (MCCC) in South Brisbane, which provides cancer treatment for thousands of public and private patients across Queensland each year.

MCCC Medical Oncologist and cancer researcher Dr Kathryn Middleton said clinical trial enrolment can enable patients to access novel therapeutic treatment options that may be shown to improve survival.

**“Clinical trials are designed to assess the potential effectiveness and side effects of newer treatments,” Dr Middleton said.**

“Mater Research has numerous clinical trials open and enrolls different types of breast cancer patients at different points in their treatment.”

Mrs Perry believes she would not be alive today without the team at the MCCC.

She was enrolled into the trial, went through six months of chemotherapy, immunotherapy and then a full

mastectomy. She has continued to have follow up appointments after treatment.

Mrs Perry, who carries the breast cancer (BRCA1) genetic variant, advocates for all women, to prioritise themselves and make a breast screen appointment.

“I don’t even want to think what would have happened if I’d put off my screening.”

**Image** Breast cancer patient Monique Perry is on her recovery journey thanks to the treatment options available to her via Mater Research clinical trials and the Mater Cancer Care Centre.

## Ovarian cancer trials could be the key to other cancers

### Mater Research Professor John Hooper’s groundbreaking ovarian cancer detection research could help improve prognoses for people with pancreatic cancer.

Prof Hooper is running a clinical trial to use one of the molecular agents he has developed since 2001 to detect ovarian cancer. He said the trial was available now for GPs whose patients are being treated by Mater oncologists.

Prof Hooper said he wanted to test the same agent on pancreatic cancer patients to develop rapid detection and targeted treatment to improve outcomes.

“Pancreatic cancer is notoriously hard to detect and treat, meaning only three out

of ten people will survive one year after a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.” he said.

“Despite the differences between pancreatic and ovarian cancer, they share some of the same proteins.

“The agent can be payloaded with a radioactive material or a drug.

“It is then injected into the patient’s bloodstream and attaches itself to the protein our research has shown us sits on the surface of cancer cells.

“If the payload is radioactive it lights up when the patient is scanned, detecting the disease and showing us where it’s located.”

### Current clinical trials for women’s cancer:

- ✔ ADELE for high-risk endometrial cancer.
- ✔ ZN-c3-002 for ovarian cancer, peritoneal or fallopian tube cancer.
- ✔ lidERA for HER2-negative breast cancer.



## Running to raise awareness for breast cancer

**Brisbane mother and Queensland X-Ray clinical support worker Mel Just was in the middle of her daily routine supporting people with cancer when she learned she had also become a patient, diagnosed with aggressive, inflammatory breast cancer.**



Despite working in the healthcare industry, Ms Just said the news hit her 'like a tonne of bricks'.

"I noticed an unusual nipple discharge, which led me to have other investigations done and, ultimately, I received a phone call from Mater Breast Surgeon Dr Emma Clarkson who told me I had cancer," she said.

Ms Just is sharing her story to encourage registrations for Mater's International Women's Day Fun Run presented by Queensland X-Ray, on Sunday 10 March 2024.

**More than 20,000 people are expected to take part in the annual community event in Brisbane, with a further 3,300 participants across regional Queensland.**

Mater Foundation Chief Executive Andrew Thomas said registrations were now open for the 2024 event, and he expected places to fill up quickly.

"Brisbane turns into a sea of pink every year for this event, as participants take to the streets in hot pink Fun Run t-shirts to support people with breast cancer, and their families," Mr Thomas said.

"All funds raised go to providing vital personalised support services, state-of-the-art equipment and life-saving research to better diagnose and treat patients."

Queensland X-Ray will present Mater's IWD Fun Run for the next five years, providing an opportunity to work together with the community.

Queensland X-Ray and Mater share the common goal of caring for people with breast cancer and improving patient outcomes.

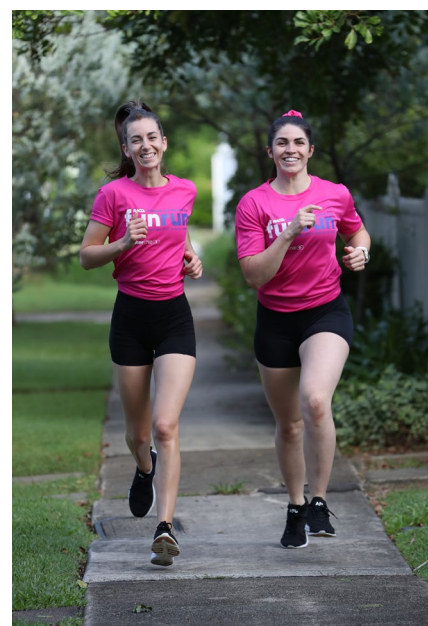
Managing Radiologist at Queensland X-Ray's Women's Imaging Centre at Mater in South Brisbane, Dr Kerry McMahon, said it was not until 2011 that full field digital mammography was introduced in Australia.

Dr McMahon said following this, "rapid improvements" had occurred including the development of 3D mammography with digital tomosynthesis and more recently contrast enhanced mammography.

In early 2024, Queensland X-Ray will be launching contrast enhanced mammography at its Mater South Brisbane practice, with a new GE Pristina mammogram machine.

Dr McMahon said many women delay or never present for mammograms due to fears around discomfort.

"However, with experienced mammographers and modern equipment there should be minimal discomfort, with compression only lasting 10 to 15 seconds for each breast," Dr McMahon said.



"Many women put their own needs behind everyone else, but all women should prioritise having a regular mammogram."

She said it was also important to understand the difference between 'screening' and 'diagnostic' mammograms.

**Top image** Mater breast cancer patient Mel Just is now on her recovery journey and is sharing her story to encourage registrations for Mater's International Women's Day Fun Run to help raise funds for breast cancer.

**Bottom image** More than 23,000 people across Queensland are anticipated to take part in the IWD Fun Run in March.



"Screening mammograms provided by the government free to all women over the age of 40 don't show symptoms," she said.

"So, if you have a symptom such as a new lump, pain, or discharge you need diagnostic imaging, which will consist of a 3D mammogram and additional ultrasound assessment."

Mr Thomas said Mater's IWD Fun Run had been a popular event on the Queensland calendar for more than 30 years with \$2 million raised at the 2023 IWD Fun Run, and a goal to set a new fundraising record in 2024.

**"I encourage Queenslanders to come together with friends, colleagues and loved ones to help improve diagnosis, outcomes and quality of life for people with breast cancer," he said.**

Ms Just said the IWD Fun Run not only raised awareness and much-needed funds for people with breast cancer, but also offered a sense of camaraderie to those touched by the disease.

"The event helps you to know that no woman has to go through breast cancer alone," she said.

**Image** Managing Radiologist of Queensland X-Ray's Women's Imaging Centre at Mater in South Brisbane, Dr Kerry McMahon.



# CH2

Clifford Hallam Healthcare

## YOUR INDEPENDENT MEDICAL CENTRE WHOLESALER



Medical Consumables



Full-Line Equipment Provider



Vaccines - Including travel vaccines



Pharmaceuticals



Online Ordering

Order online, check invoices & backorders, download PODS,  
view live pricing and stock availability with our online system CH2 direct.



National Supplier

Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle, Brisbane,  
Townsville, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart.

**To open an account or find out how CH2 can assist you contact our friendly team at [primarycare@ch2.net.au](mailto:primarycare@ch2.net.au)**

# Innovative ovarian cancer *chemotherapy treatments*

**Mater is continuing to cement itself as a leader in gynaecological cancer management in Queensland, with its innovations in chemotherapy treatments for women with epithelial ovarian cancer.**



**Image** Mater Gynaecological Oncologist Dr Nisha Jagasia says Mater is one of only a handful of services in Australia using HIPEC to treat ovarian cancer.

More than 35 women have now undergone hyperthermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy (HIPEC), which sees heated (42°C), high-dose chemotherapy flushed through the patient's abdomen during surgery for their ovarian cancer. Mater Hospital Brisbane is the first and only hospital in Queensland to perform the procedure for patients with epithelial ovarian cancer. It's currently offered to suitable patients (private and public) who have been identified through a rigorous multidisciplinary team process and who have already received cycles of intravenous chemotherapy.

Mater Gynaecological Oncologist Dr Nisha Jagasia said HIPEC not only improved survival rates, but had proven to be a safe procedure.

**"We've recently published our data on the first 25 patients in the Australian Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, showing that it's a very safe and feasible treatment to offer without any increase in significant morbidity/mortality or delays to subsequent chemotherapy," Dr Jagasia said.**

A Dutch study found HIPEC can provide an extra 12 months of life for ovarian cancer patients, which is a major improvement in outcomes for a disease with a five-year survival rate of 49 per cent.

"I don't think we've seen anything like that—in terms of improvement in overall survival—for any surgical treatment of epithelial ovarian cancer," Dr Jagasia said.

**"So, it's the one thing we're doing differently at the time of surgery that's showing a meaningful impact in terms of patient survival of this disease."**

Mater is also participating in the HyNOVA trial, which is investigating whether HIPEC patients respond better to the heated chemotherapy or chemotherapy delivered at body temperature (37°C) known as normothermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy (NIPEC).

Seven patients have now participated in the study.

"While it's too early to tell whether heating the intraperitoneal chemotherapy makes it a more effective treatment, it should prove to be very interesting data," Dr Jagasia said.

## How to refer

### Dr Nisha Jagasia

Specialty: Gynaecological Oncology

Mater Hospital Brisbane  
Mater Private Hospital Brisbane

07 3844 9932

[Referral information](#)

## New technology leads to better breast cancer outcomes

**A new medical imaging system at Mater Private Hospital Brisbane will give women with breast cancer better outcomes by providing surgeons and radiologists access to real-time medical imaging during breast-conserving surgery.**

Mater Private Hospital Brisbane Director of Medical Services Professor Chris Pyke said the new technology, called the Faxitron Trident Specimen Radiography

System, was part of a broader medical-technology trend moving towards "point of care service".

"In this instance that means you can use the new system right there during surgery and you don't have to wait for specimens to be taken for x-ray and returned to theatre," Dr Pyke said.

"So, if you're in the middle of surgery and you need to know if you have removed sufficient tissue from the patient, you can get immediate in-theatre analysis.

**"This lets you know if you need to take more tissue, immediately lowering the need for further surgery due to cancerous tissue not being removed."**

Dr Pyke said Mater Private Hospital Brisbane was a Centre of Excellence in breast cancer treatment and the Faxitron Trident Specimen Radiography System ensured patients continued to receive the best possible care and latest technology.



## Revolution in hysterectomy surgery comes to Springfield

A new hysterectomy procedure that leaves no scars and causes little pain has been performed at Mater Private Hospital Springfield for the first time.



The minimally invasive surgery, performed by Mater gynaecologist Dr James McLaren, eliminates the need for surgical incisions in the patient's abdomen.

Patient Kylie Godfrey, 49, of Logan Village, said her life changed dramatically after the Vaginal Natural Orifice Transluminal Endoscopic Surgery (vNOTES) and she was "up and about straight after surgery, and home the next day".

**Dr McLaren said vNOTES enabled surgeons to remove the uterus, fallopian tubes, and, if required, ovaries through the vagina, with the use of specialised instruments.**

The instruments are placed through the vagina into the pelvic cavity, avoiding the need for abdominal skin incisions.

Dr McLaren studied the technique while working at London's King's College Hospital and is one of only a handful of Queensland surgeons qualified to perform the procedure.

"Compared with an abdominal hysterectomy procedure, where recovery can take up to six weeks, minimally invasive approaches such as vNOTES provide obvious benefits such as reduced operating times, faster recovery, less post-operative pain and decreased blood loss," Dr McLaren said.

"Unlike the standard vaginal approach, vNOTES allows for easy access to the fallopian tubes and ovaries. Removal of fallopian tubes at the time of hysterectomy has been shown to reduce the risk of ovarian cancer."

Since introducing the procedure at Mater Mothers' Hospital in March last year, Dr McLaren has performed 18 vNOTES hysterectomies, providing the surgery at Mater Private Hospital Brisbane and now Mater Private Hospital Springfield.

vNOTES hysterectomies can be performed for a number of conditions such as uterine fibroids, prolapse of the uterus, pelvic pain, abnormal or heavy menstrual bleeding, and painful periods.

**Image** Mater Private Hospital Springfield patient Kylie Godfrey was home the day after surgery thanks to the new vNOTES minimally invasive hysterectomy procedure.

### How to refer

**Dr James McLaren**  
Specialty: Gynaecology

 Mater Private Hospital Brisbane

 07 3145 0360

 [Referral information](#)



# Great gran's powerlifting glory after beating cancer

**A Queensland great grandma who beat breast cancer for the third time has gone on to set new powerlifting records in Australia and across the world.**



Mater Private Hospital Redland (MPHRd) patient Heather Maddern has fought cancer three times since 2015 and two years ago received a shock diagnosis of Parkinson's disease.

Ms Maddern said she turned to strength training as part of her exercise regime following her last cancer treatment in April 2023.

"Powerlifting has made me mentally and physically stronger," she said.

Diagnosed with a grade one cancer on her right breast in 2015, Ms Maddern underwent surgery and radiation at MPHRd.

In 2020, she was diagnosed with a grade three cancer on her left breast, again requiring surgery and radiation.

Last year Ms Maddern was told cancer had spread into multiple lymph nodes.

Aged in her 80s, Ms Maddern had surgery to remove her lymph nodes, followed by chemotherapy and 25 rounds of radiation.

She finished treatment and, six months later in December 2023, set a new deadlift record of 80kgs at the Capo Powerlifting Australia competition in Brisbane.

**Image** Mater Private Hospital Redland cancer patient, great-grandmother Heather Maddern is a powerlifting record holder after hitting the gym as part of her post-treatment exercise program.

MPHRd treating Oncologist Dr Vikram Jain and Breast Surgeon Dr Jason Lambley said exercise and fitness were important for cancer patients.

"Heather suffered side effects from her cancer treatment but managed courageously," Dr Jain said.

Heather never gave up.

"Her attitude to life has had a lot to do with where she is now. She didn't get run down, she was fit and that really helped."

## ? How to refer

### Dr Vikram Jain

Specialty: Oncology

📍 Mater Hospital Brisbane  
Mater Private Hospital Brisbane  
Mater Private Hospital Redland

☎ 07 3411 8559

➔ [Referral information](#)

### Dr Jason Lambley

Specialty: Breast and Endocrine Surgery

📍 Mater Hospital Brisbane  
Mater Private Hospital Brisbane  
Mater Private Hospital Redland

☎ 07 3163 7366

➔ [Referral information](#)

## Benefits of exercise for cancer patients:

- ✔ Management of chemotherapy side effects, especially fatigue.
- ✔ Improvements in the health and wellbeing of patients during treatment.
- ✔ Social connection and interaction.

## Mater Private Hospital Redland welcomes *new paediatrician*

**Brisbane's bayside has a new paediatrician with Dr Clara Menezes accepting referrals at Mater Private Hospital Redland (MPHRd).**

With 25 years of experience, Dr Menezes offers comprehensive care for children from birth to 16 years of age.

Experienced in forensic and child protection paediatrics, indigenous health and holistic care, Dr Menezes has a special interest in young children with growth and

development issues, allergies and genetic and epigenetic factors contributing to chronic conditions.

## ? How to refer

### Dr Clara Menezes

Specialty: Paediatrics

📍 Mater Mothers' Private Redland  
Mater Mothers' Private Brisbane  
Mater Private Hospital Mackay

☎ 07 3163 7330

➔ [Referral information](#)





# Mater expands perinatal mental healthcare service

More than 70 new mothers have received specialist in-patient perinatal mental healthcare support since Catherine's House for Mothers, Babies and Families opened at Mater Hill, South Brisbane a year ago.



From February 2024, Catherine's House will start delivering evidence-based private day programs to support parents in developing skills to manage anxiety, depression and other challenges during early parenting years.

Mater Young Adult and Mental Health Senior Manager Greg McGahan said the day programs had been approved by private health funds and would be delivered by experienced mental health professionals.

**Image** Brisbane mum Grace Forbes was the first in-patient at Catherine's House.

"The new day programs we are introducing from February are based on research and have been designed to support parents in developing skills in managing anxiety and depression as well as enhancing parent-infant bonding and more," Mr McGahan said.

"The team at Catherine's House will triage patients to ensure they receive the program that best fits their needs."

Catherine's House provides specialist suites for GPs and professionals across mental health and allied health sectors.

## How to refer

Participation in private day programs is by referral from a GP, psychiatrist or obstetrician:

☎ 07 3163 2299

✉ [CH\\_MBF@mater.org.au](mailto:CH_MBF@mater.org.au)

# Perinatal psychiatrist joins Mater

## Dr Kannan Kallapiran has joined the team of perinatal mental healthcare specialists at Catherine's House.

With more than 20 years' experience as a psychiatrist, Dr Kallapiran specialises in supporting mothers who are depressed, who experience difficulties bonding with their babies, who lack motivation and who do not enjoy motherhood.

"It is my passion to reduce the intergenerational transmission of risk to the baby by working with the family and mother of the baby," Dr Kallapiran said.

Dr Kallapiran, who is also the Medical Director of specialist teams in Child

Youth Mental Health Service at Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service, uses a combination of medical and psychological therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Acceptance Commitment Therapy, Mentalisation-based treatment and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. He works in a strength-based, recovery-oriented model, empowering mothers to live in alignment with their values.

"I tend to see mothers who are very anxious about caring for their child or can't sleep because they are worrying about them," Dr Kallapiran said.

He is currently participating in the Positive Childhood Experiences (PCE) research project at The University of Queensland,

evaluating the impact of PCEs on adult mental health outcomes. Referrals are required for Dr Kallapiran.

## How to refer

**Dr Kannan Kallapiran**  
Specialty: Psychiatry

📍 Catherine's House for Mothers, Babies and Families

☎ 07 3163 2299

➔ [Referral information](#)



## Signs and symptoms of perinatal mental health issues:

- ✔ Reduced enjoyment in activities including interaction with the baby.
- ✔ Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt or tearfulness.
- ✔ Recurrent scary thoughts about something bad happening to their baby or themselves.
- ✔ Thoughts of wanting to die or wanting to escape.
- ✔ Palpitations, chest tightness, shortness of breath or body tension.

## Mater Mothers launches Parent Lounge mindfulness app



**Mater Mothers is helping mums find a moment of calm in their day, with the launch of the new Parent Lounge mindfulness app.**

Catherine's House for Mothers, Babies and Families Service Development and Research Team Leader Dr Grace Branjerdporn said the need for the app was identified during the COVID pandemic.

The free, pocket relaxation tool utilises evidence-based, mindfulness techniques and resources that can be accessed from anywhere, any time.

The app was co-created by experts in perinatal mental health and psychology, with mums who had lived experience of perinatal mental illness.

"It's great that women can access the latest evidence-based calming techniques in the palm of their hand," Dr Branjerdporn said.

"The app features a library of short "Relax Trax" tailored to different stages of pregnancy and post pregnancy; targeting mindfulness, mother-infant bonding, relaxation and meditation."

Additionally, the app provides information for national support hotlines and services and self-managed mood-tracking.

"This will help mums be mentally resilient and stay well in the community," Dr Branjerdporn said.

**Developing mindfulness strategies in pregnant women is one of the many support systems they can access during and after pregnancy. Parent Lounge packages this support into one easy to access app for all mums at Mater Mothers.**

The app is available via the Apple App Store and the Android Store.

Mater Mothers' Parenting Support Centre offers early parenting support and guidance for new parents up to six months after the birth of their baby.

**Image** Dr Grace Branjerdporn led the creation of a new app for mothers after COVID revealed a need for access to mindfulness resources anywhere, anytime.

## More extremely premature babies surviving at Mater

**Extreme prematurity has traditionally been defined as babies born at less than 28 weeks' gestation. Today, Mater is saving more babies born at 23 weeks, thanks to advances in technologies, treatments and expertise.**

Mater Director of Neonatology Dr Pita Birch said eight babies were born at Mater last year at 23 weeks and all had overcome daunting odds to survive.

"Babies born at 23 weeks generally have a 50-50 chance of survival." Dr Birch said.

"They are so tiny and fragile and often spend months in hospital."

"Care by multidisciplinary neonatal critical care teams deliver incredible attention to detail and are helping these tiny babies survive and thrive."

Mater Neonatologist Dr Luke Jardine said the move to resuscitate and care for babies at 23 weeks' gestation about 10 years ago was a big one.

"Every day counts, with the biggest difference being lung and skin development," Dr Jardine said.

He said with the more extreme prematurity cases, (22-24 weeks gestation) babies were in a "grey zone" when it came to survival.

"With these cases, we talk to the families, give them the information we've got, we give them their options and talk through the pros and cons of both and then the parents can help us out a bit by telling us what their wishes are, or their expectations," he said.

**Image** Greenbank parents, Sasha Sami and Lexcen-Fili Penese withe baby Lexcen-Fili, born at 23 weeks.





## Get sMater with Mater's clinical podcast series

sMater—Mater's podcast by clinicians for clinicians—has expanded following the success of its debut season on preterm births.



Image sMater podcast host and Channel Seven presenter Jillian Whiting (left) with co-host, Mater Mothers' Hospital Senior Staff Specialist Catherine Cooper.

More than 2,000 people have tuned into sMater to hear about topics such as when to perform a cervical cerclage, the benefits of delayed cord clamping and how to handle extreme prematurity.

sMater is a podcast by clinicians for clinicians and was launched late last year.

In the first series of episodes, Mater Staff Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology Dr Huda Safa speaks about recognising the risk of preterm birth and shares a new message around cervical length measurements during the traditional transabdominal morphology scan.

"If the length that is measured is less than 35mm, or indeed the cervix cannot be clearly visualised, that's when the next step is indicated, which is offering the woman a transvaginal scan, which offers a more accurate look at cervical length," Dr Safa said.

"A transvaginally-measured cervical length of less than 25mm is defined as short and requires an intervention, ideally that same day."

Mater Chief Medical Officer Dr Mike Beckmann said the podcast's constructive and collaborative format is proving to be a benefit to clinicians.

"We hope that by sharing information and experiences—like we have in sMater's preterm birth series - we can create a community where we can connect and work together to improve healthcare across Australia, regardless of whether listeners are based at a tertiary facility or rural facility," Dr Beckmann said.

sMater's latest instalment focuses on Women's Health, specifically breast, ovarian and uterine cancers, complementing Mater's **Putting Women First** campaign.

Hear about the rising role of neoadjuvant therapies in breast cancer treatment with Breast Surgeon Dr Ben Lancashire, and Senior Research Fellow Professor John Hooper's upcoming clinical trial for ovarian cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Gynaecological Oncologist Dr Nimithri Cabraal also discusses the increasing incidence rate of endometrial cancer, and what to look for.

"In post-menopause, any episode of post-menopausal bleeding needs to be investigated, and if someone comes in complaining of urinary bleeding or PR bleeding, that could be vaginal too," said Dr Cabraal.

"In pre-menopause it's a bit harder, but any people who have abnormal bleeding—such as heavy periods—need to have uterine sampling as well."

Mater clinicians based at Mater Private Hospital Townsville and Mater Private Hospital Mackay are also hitting sMater's airwaves, sharing insights on a range of specialities and topics ranging from cardiology to urology and paediatrics to palliative care.



Join us, connect with us and learn with us, with sMater. Subscribe to sMater on your favourite platform:

## Our Mater Network

Operating the largest not-for-profit network of public and private hospital and healthcare services in the state, Mater brings together collective expertise across health, education, and research, with a shared vision of empowering people to live better lives through improved health and wellbeing.

**Mater Health** comprises all our hospitals and healthcare services across Queensland. These services combine to help Mater offer comprehensive healthcare which meets identified community need.

**Mater Education** is a nationally accredited, hospital-based independent Registered Training Organisation—the only one of its kind in Queensland. It offers a range of courses for students, through to highly experienced practising clinicians.

**Mater Research** is an internationally recognised leader in medical research, which connects its findings from bench to bedside—translating medical research into clinical practice to deliver better outcomes for our patients and the wider community.

**Mater Foundation** raises funds by engaging people and businesses to partner with Mater to improve health through a wide range of fundraising and philanthropy.



### Mater Private Hospital Townsville

Stephanie Barwick | General Manager  
stephanie.barwick@mater.org.au



### Mater Private Hospital Mackay

Karen Wade | General Manager  
karen.wade@mater.org.au



### Mater Private Hospital Rockhampton

Alison Boyle | General Manager  
alison.boyle@mater.org.au



### Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg

Catherine Hackney | General Manager  
catherine.hackney@mater.org.au



### Mater Mothers' Private Hospital Mater Mothers' Hospital

Kerri Gane | General Manager  
kerri.gane@mater.org.au



### Mater Private Hospital Brisbane Mater Hospital Brisbane

Jennifer Pitt | General Manager  
jennifer.pitt@mater.org.au



### Mater Private Hospital Redland Mater Mothers' Private Redland

Chris Junge | General Manager  
chris.junge@mater.org.au



### Mater Private Hospital Springfield

Suzanne Hawksley | General Manager  
suzanne.hawksley@mater.org.au



### Get social with us

@MaterQLD  
 @MaterQLD

@MaterQLD  
 @Mater

@MaterTV