

GROWING UP with cancer

What's it like having to deal with cancer AND with growing up?

We all know that adolescence is a time for big changes. There's a whole lot of stuff going on, like school, uni, TAFE, jobs, relationships, learning to drive, moving out of home and more. There's also some big identity-related questions like 'who am I?' and 'what kind of adult will I be?'. We can all guess that getting a cancer diagnosis at this time can have lots of unexpected effects.

Growing Up with Cancer is a research project about the impact of cancer and treatment on adolescents and young adults. It's great news that CanTeen's Research & Evaluation Team is working with the University of Sydney and the University of Newcastle on this exciting project. We're conducting surveys and interviews with young people aged between 14 and 24, whose cancer was diagnosed at age 11 or later. We'll also be interviewing parents of young people who have a cancer diagnosis, and health care professionals.

Ok, that all sounds like a good idea, and a fairly standard research project.

Well, because the project is about the 'who am I?' identity-related questions, we are doing something a bit more exciting than just talking to people... We're asking young people to make a self portrait - this could be in the form of a photograph, a collage, a poem, a video, a dance, a song, stencil graffiti, a painting, a sculpture, an avatar, an animation, or a... who knows.... Basically, it is a different way for young people to express something about themselves and their experiences of growing up with cancer.

Wow! How does that work?

People attend a self portrait workshop in Sydney and work with Kris, our friendly artist (the bearded guy in the photos). They learn about lighting and different photographic techniques, and use state-of-the-art digital equipment to make their own self portrait. The images on this page show people working together in the workshops we've already run. Some people brought things along to use in their self portrait and some used the workshop to come up with ideas and then make something afterwards. So far no one has offered to make an avatar or write a song but we're hoping!

What will you do with the self portraits?

When the self portrait is finished, a researcher will interview the young person about it. When all the self portraits are done we'll ask people if they'd like to be part of an exhibition to show the public what it is like to grow

up with cancer. It'll be up to them to decide who they want to see their self portrait. Some people might decide the portrait is just for them.

How will your project help young people with cancer?

The project will educate people about the needs of young people with cancer. It will help health care professionals and CanTeen offer more support to young people who have to deal with cancer AND deal with growing up.

**Pandora Patterson and Brett Millar,
Research & Evaluation Team, CanTeen**

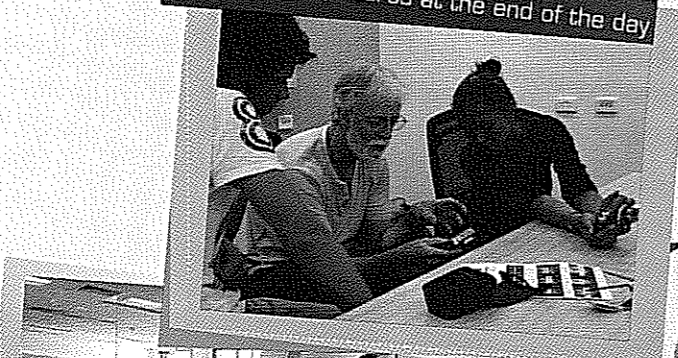
**Julie Mooney-Somers and Peter Lewis,
University of Sydney**

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

If you're aged between 14 and 24, and your cancer was diagnosed at age 11 or later then we're looking for you! It's easy to start, just fill in the online survey at www.canteen.org.au/GUWC.

If you'd like to take part in an interview and make a self portrait about your experiences, give Peter or Julie a call on 02 9036 3433 or 0421 567 895 or send an email to GUWC@usyd.edu.au.

Reviewing the pictures at the end of the day



A workshop at Sydney Uni



Checking out the pictures

NEWSFLASH!

CanTeen to Pilot Counselling Service for Offspring Members

We all know how great CanTeen is at bringing together young people who are going through similar experiences. The peer support provided to each other by CanTeen Members is amazing and its effects can be invaluable. Unfortunately for some Young People Living with Cancer (YPLWC) their needs are greater than can be met solely through the peer support CanTeen provides. We are also aware that not all of our Membership groups have access to the same type or even same level of services outside CanTeen.

With this in mind, you may have heard that CanTeen has in recent times been investigating the possibility of introducing some kind of formal counselling service to provide an additional level of support. What you may not have heard is that CanTeen recently had the opportunity to apply for funding to implement a pilot (or kind of trial/test run) of this counselling service. And guess what...we got the money!

Thanks to the really generous support of the rib Foundation, we have funding to pilot a specific CanTeen counselling program for young people who's Mum or Dad has cancer or has died from cancer. The pilot will be hosted in three different sites - Brisbane, Newcastle and Melbourne over the next three years, and will be open to both Members and non-Members.

The service will provide group and one-on-one counselling. Telephone counselling will also be available for young people who live in rural and remote areas, as well as online counselling options. The service will be provided free of charge by qualified mental health professionals who have experience in working with young people, and they will be based in the CanTeen offices as part of our wonderful staff.

The Offspring and Bereaved Offspring group has been chosen as the focus of the pilot because while there are currently other great organisations such as RedKite, that offer counselling for young people with cancer or with a sibling with cancer; no one else offers a service specifically for the Offspring group. Our research has shown that this is a gap that really needs to be filled.

We will be formally launching this new project in July (watch this space for more details) and if the pilot is successful we hope to eventually offer it across all our Divisions.

If you have any questions or want some more information about this project please feel free to contact Francesca Pinzone (National Office) fpinzone@canteen.org.au

