

Project 20 interviews

«Professionals speak about their daily work and their missions»

Interview with Deborah Delle and Carole Castagna, breast care nurses at Centre Hospitalier Emile Mayrisch.

Since 2010, **Deborah Delle**, a nurse by training, has been working in the oncology department at Centre Hospitalier Emile Mayrisch (CHEM). In 2021, after applying for the position of Breast Care Nurse (BCN), she followed a training course in Essen, Germany, in order to obtain her diploma as a BCN. Since then, she has been working part-time in the Chemotherapy Polyclinic and part-time as a BCN. She shares this task with her colleague **Carole Castagna**. The fact that there are two BCN nurses at CHEM means that they are present on a daily basis. Their job includes: accompanying the patients throughout their care; coming into contact with patients before and after breast surgery, or if chemotherapy is planned; participating in multidisciplinary consultation meetings.

When they meet with patients for surgery, a pre-operative interview is scheduled to clarify certain questions about the procedure. Heart-shaped cushions, sewn by volunteer organisations, are also distributed by them. During the post-operative period, the BCNs provide advice on mobilising the arm on the operated side, and on simple wound care.

The BCNs also help with body image acceptance after a mastectomy, and provide a temporary bra and prosthesis after a mastectomy. According to Deborah, it is important to remember that men can also be affected by breast cancer. They too can suffer from an altered body image, even if they do not express it in the same way. The same applies to side effects of treatment. During a first chemotherapy session, BCNs provide chemo education, information about the products, possible side effects and advice on how to avoid and/or alleviate them.

Patients are often grateful for these talks and for the nurses' availability, because even after treatment, the BCNs can be called on if needed.

Personal message from Deborah:

Prevention is better than cure. Prevention is very important: regular check-ups with a gynaecologist; self-examination and screening are essential. Awareness-raising at school is also important. One in eight women can develop breast cancer. Breast cancer remains the most common cancer for women. However, when it is discovered early, the chances of recovery are good.

Carole Castagna has been a nurse for 17 years.

She worked for six years in Thionville's emergency services, then was nurse coordinator for five years. She joined CHEM in 2017. She worked for three years in the Surgical Polyclinic, and since 2021 in the chemotherapy service, and as a BCN. She has followed various training courses at the

University of Strasbourg and at the Lorraine Cancer Institute in Nancy where she has acquired an in-depth knowledge of breast cancer, surgery, hormone treatments and patient management. As a BCN Carole sees her role primarily in prevention, education and support.

In her view, a BCN is the guiding light from diagnosis to the end of treatment and beyond.

The two BCNs, with their knowledge and experience, complement each other and make a great team. Carole has had first-hand experience, and has been through the treatment process. She has enormous empathy on both psychological and emotional levels, and relates to the anxiety and the questions that patients might have. It is undoubtedly her experience that motivated her to apply for this position.

Personal message from Carole:

It is important to actively encourage prevention: mammography, early detection, self-examination and regular follow-up by the gynaecologist.

Patients: Never give up hope, and believe in the treatment as medicines and methods are continuously evolving. Stay positive, too, as morale plays a vital role in the healing process.

Thank you, Deborah and Carole, for the information, and for your enormous commitment to all your patients.



From left to right: Carole Castagna, Deborah Delle.

The interview was conducted by Ms. Françoise Hetto-Gaasch, member of the committee of Europa Donna Luxembourg.

Europa Donna Luxembourg Asbl
1b rue Thomas Edison L-1445 Strassen
Tél. : 621 47 83 94
E-mail : europadonna@pt.lu
www.europadonna.lu