

Project 20 interviews

«Professionals speak about their daily work and their missions»

Interview with Madam Mariette Fischbach President of Europa Donna Luxembourg.

For almost 11 years, Mariette Fischbach has been the president of Europa Donna Luxembourg (EDL). This association, created in 2002, is a major player in the fight against breast cancer and aims to raise public awareness of the subject and optimize patient care. EDL is also a member of ED International.

Thanks to her training as a graduate nurse, Mariette has an in-depth knowledge of the different fields of medicine, and of patient care.

She worked in the Clinique Ste Zitha as a graduate nurse and anaesthetist nurse in the intensive care unit, and a few years later joined the care management of Wiltz hospital (especially interesting because of her involvement in quality improvement projects). However, for the last ten years of her career, Mariette has accompanied people at the end of their lives at Clinique Ste Zitha, and also at Zitha Senior in Consdorf.

She herself has had breast cancer and became a member of the EDL committee in 2008. Looking back over the years, she can see that breast cancer is less and less of a taboo subject today.

In 2012, EDL celebrated its 10th anniversary, and as part of the celebrations, they organized an Academic Day along with exhibitions to increase visibility. A play was also created especially for this event.

Over the years EDL has contributed to talking about breast cancer in a different way, and to raise awareness of this delicate subject.

Mariette takes her role as president very seriously. She reminisces about some of the events that have been held such as the open days for support care and at the rehabilitation center in Colpach, then the lingerie shows, various conferences, a collection of bras and an exhibition of pink shoes also to raise awareness, and to symbolize the path a breast cancer patient has to walk along. Then finally a collection of wigs and prostheses was organized to donate to women with breast cancer in Kyrgyzstan.

Of course, there is also the annual Broschkriibslaf, which is a run where participants dress up in colorful, mostly pink costumes, to raise further awareness, and to show solidarity with breast cancer patients. It takes place every first Saturday in October.

Mariette looks back at the history of breast cancer care in Luxembourg, which is centered around four hospitals where there is a concentration of resources and skills, including the introduction of Breast Care Nurses and the improvement of psycho-oncological care.

She proudly mentions the two surveys carried out with TNS Ilres in 2004 and 2015. There were 219 breast cancer patients who took part in this, to measure the progress in the quality of care, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the need to be integrated into our future improvement projects.

One of the objectives of the association is to raise awareness of the risk factors. So, clubs and companies try to involve their staff in preventative and informative sessions.

Mariette, or another committee member, is available to listen to patients who contact EDL, either by phone, e-mail or at EDL's office, so that their questions can be answered and advice or information given. A person who has had cancer is always a good contact person for a patient who has recently been diagnosed or is worried about not getting the best treatment.

In terms of new EDL projects, Mariette mentions:

- Free monthly discussion groups under the guidance of a psychologist
- A family support project, which has been running since October 2022 in collaboration with the Cancer Foundation and Arcus. It is aimed at families with young children, whose mothers have to be away from home regularly for treatment
- Visits to companies that have called on EDL to offer them information and awareness sessions especially during Pink October, and the rest of the year
- Awareness-raising and fundraising activities offered by companies such as Boulangeries Paul, Feeling Lingerie and Cocottes
- Awareness raising in general; for example, hospitals organizing special breast cancer information days during October, pink ribbons as a symbol of breast cancer, which are distributed every year
- Support care like Ayurvedic massage, reflexology and sophrology, for which videos are being made to better promote these treatments which aim to help the well-being of women concerned. EDL plans to show these videos (which also contain personal stories from breast cancer patients) in medical waiting rooms and oncology departments of hospitals.
- The Broschkriibslaf which again took place in 2022 in the Hesperange park.
- Flyers on self-care, particularly aimed at very young women.

Mariette would like to mention the excellent collaboration she has had with the committee members, each of them contributing with their own qualities and knowledge.

Other important partners:

- Breast Care Nurses of the different hospitals
- Cancer Foundation
- Think Pink Luxembourg
- CHL, which has just opened its Patienthouse where associations can meet patients

- Groupe Sein CHL blog, where you can find personal stories, information and articles on breast cancer
- HRS with its "Actor of my health" platform, a project to which EDL has contributed and co-financed
- François Baclesse Centre, with whom EDL published a brochure on radiotherapy, in French and English
- Colpach Rehabilitation Centre, for which EDL financed the meditation course
- CAPAT (circle of patient associations), which EDL will join as a member
- ALGSO (Luxembourg Association of Oncology Sports Groups), which accompanies patients on sports training sessions organized in groups in different parts of the country.

Of course, Mariette is well aware that communication plays a key role in all preventive and awareness work. To this end, ED Luxembourg sends its digital newsletter to around 500 people, is active on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

If you would like to join EDL's 350 members just sign up at www.europadonna.lu

Mariette, a big thank you. You are a great president!



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

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