

Educational Material for BODIES

A play written by Raminder Kaur, directed by Mukul Ahmed

Breast cancer is the [third most common cancer death](#) in West Sussex. October as the [Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#) can bring mixed emotions for those who have experienced a diagnosis. The topic is widely discussed but there remains a lack of understanding around people's experiences and the rollercoaster of emotions that accompany a diagnosis and its long-term treatments. It is more often associated with the 'pink fluffy fighting' campaigns seen in the media.

Based on interviews and workshops with patients and those who work in the cancer sector, [BODIES](#) sought to **raise more awareness**. Coming to see a brand new play beginning with a scene in an operating theatre where surgeons discuss cancerous tissue in a breast to be removed, the audience rightly assume this will be a play about breast cancer. [BODIES](#) was, but it was not a woman who was lying on the operating table. Instead, it was a 36 year old man, Arjun, whose story we witnessed.

It is true that **male breast cancer** is rarely spoken about. 'Chest carcinoma' - Arjun preferred to call it while feeling that his health along with his sense of masculinity was severely threatened. He had to sit in consultation and begin to accept what to do about his diagnosis. He considers how he could tell his family and face the fear, isolation and consequences of treatments such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy. He raises the fallacy that men 'do not have breasts' and therefore do not need to check them.

Research charity, **Breast Cancer Now** (soon to merge with [Breast Cancer Care](#)), state that breast cancer in men is rare – about 1% of men in the west. Around 350 men are diagnosed with the disease each year in the UK compared with over 55,000 women.

Around [80 men die from breast cancer every year](#) as the disease is so often far gone when it is first detected, most men believing that they do not need to regularly check the area.

Support groups and centres play a crucial role in providing an outlet to talk, share and meet others sharing the same rollercoaster. A scene in [BODIES](#) reflected this with Arjun being the only male in a chatty and friendly breast cancer support group. He then sought to make new friends from all backgrounds, all coming together with one strong link between them – their shared diagnosis.

On the evening of the play at [Crawley Hawth](#), a wide array of cancer support information was on display including leaflets showing the support provided by [The Olive Tree Cancer Support Centre](#) such as **Pink Ribbon Pilates**, alternative therapies and counselling routes.

[Shine Cancer Support](#) whose members supported the show, are the only UK-wide charity network exclusively for young adults in their 20s, 30s and 40s. They have an active Sussex meet-up group, private Facebook group and a range of additional events including an annual conference in London.

[Breast Cancer Care](#) and [Bloodwise](#) provided leaflets and the card company.

[Dandelion Stationary](#) provided some beautiful cards sensitively designed on the cancer issue.

[Headwrappers](#) provided wigs that were used in one of the scenes in BODIES.

Local Breast Cancer Support Groups who also supported the production include:

Chrysalis at [The Olive Tree Cancer Support Centre](#) at Crawley Hospital.

ABC Group at [SASH East Surrey Macmillan Cancer Support Centre](#) at East Surrey Hospital.

Read about [some accounts](#) on male breast cancer [experiences](#).

Learn about the latest on research on cancer with [Cancer Research UK](#)

Learn about campaigns to eradicate the disease with [Breast Cancer Deadline](#)

L-R BBC newsreader **Nicolas Owen**, Crawley mayor **Carlos Castro**, Rebecca Dorkins, MP and chair of all-party parliamentary group on blood cancer, **Henry Smith**, Olive Tree fundraising manager, **Alyson Smith**, and play director, **Mukul Ahmed**, come together for [BODIES](#) at [Crawley Hawth](#) on October 1, 2018.



David Dawes photography

Rebecca Dorkins