



Free DVD: Breast Cancer Genetics And The Sephardic Jewish Woman

You can now order a free DVD of Sharsheret's recent symposium, **Breast Cancer Genetics And The Sephardic Jewish Woman**, recorded on March 26, 2008 at the Sephardic Community Center in Brooklyn, New York. The symposium addressed new research on genetic susceptibility for Jewish women of Sephardic descent, breast cancer surveillance recommendations for all women, and support options available to Jewish women and their families facing breast cancer. A written transcript of the event will soon be available online at www.sharsheret.org. To order your free symposium DVD, please e-mail info@sharsheret.org. This symposium was funded by a generous grant from the **Greater New York City Affiliate of Susan G. Komen For The Cure**.

TEAM SHARSHERET TO JOIN NYC RACE FOR THE CURE



Join Team Sharsheret in New York City's Central Park at the Susan G. Komen **Race For The Cure** on **Sunday, September 14, 2008**. Last year, Team Sharsheret was the largest Race team powered by more than 350 participants. **To join Team Sharsheret today, please register online at www.komennyc.org**, click on "Race For The Cure" then click on "Join A Race Team" and select Team Sharsheret. To add your company's name and logo to Team Sharsheret's t-shirts, please e-mail info@sharsheret.org

or call (866) 474-2774. A special thank you to Alana Riss Fine and Ronni Prosansky for coordinating Team Sharsheret at Race For The Cure in Minneapolis, Minnesota. To learn how you can build Team Sharsheret in your area, please e-mail events@sharsheret.org.

OUR VOICES: SPOTLIGHT ON SHARSHERET LINK DEENA KOBELL



My Miracle Baby

I am the proud mother of a 14 month-old baby girl who some have called a "miracle baby." This miracle had its basis in some of the most advanced medicine being practiced today. My journey to become a mother began in April 2001, when at the age of 29, I learned that I had Stage II breast cancer, and that I was a carrier of the BRCA1 genetic mutation.

Since my tumor was very aggressive, and because I was so young, my doctors recommended that I immediately undergo a lumpectomy followed by six months of chemotherapy and then radiation treatment. They also strongly encouraged me to have an oophorectomy (ovary removal) as soon as possible. Although it seemed inconceivable at the time, I informed my medical Team that I hoped to have children someday. They told me there was no time to do any fertility preservation and that I would have to roll the proverbial dice where my fertility was concerned. While there was almost no data on precisely what impact the prescribed chemotherapy would have on my fertility, it was certain to have some impact, and there was a chance that I would become infertile as a result. Since my tumor was negative for estrogen and progesterone receptors, they told me that if I was still cancer-free three years after the completion of my treatment, I could safely start trying to conceive, but that it would be prudent to have my ovaries removed as close to the age of 35 as

possible in order to gain the most benefit from their removal.

Fortunately, my cancer did not return, and in March 2004, three years after I completed cancer treatment, I began fertility treatment. After one visit to a fertility center in the area, where a physician suggested that I should consider not having a child in light of my history of cancer and BRCA status, I found my way to a wonderful fertility practice. I tried to conceive for over a year. However, because I was unable to conceive using those methods, and was almost 35 years old, I decided it was time to move on to in vitro fertilization (IVF) so that I could proceed with my oophorectomy as soon as possible. Once it became clear that my circumstances required IVF, I wrote to physicians and geneticists in the United States and abroad, inquiring as to whether it would be possible to test the resulting embryos for the BRCA1 gene so that I could avoid passing it on to my child(ren), as each child would have a 50% chance of inheriting the gene. After being told by numerous geneticists and physicians that such testing was simply not possible in the U.S. for various legal, cost, and logistical reasons, I learned that there was one geneticist who had recently secured permission from Myriad Laboratories, the company owning the patent to the genetic sequence for the BRCA mutations, to perform pre-implantation genetic diagnosis on embryos for the BRCA1 mutation. Within a few months, and after analyzing blood samples from my entire immediate family (including my sister's DNA, which I brought back from Israel in a vial in my pocket), the genetics team had developed a genetic prototype to assist them in finding the abnormality in the embryos, and we were on our way.

In April 2005, I underwent IVF, and was fortunate to have had a successful stimulation with fifteen embryos that were fertilized. My embryologists carefully removed a single cell from each of the embryos, and three geneticists worked around-the-clock for nineteen hours to locate the gene abnormality in each of the cells. The geneticist explained that this was akin to looking through 3,000 sets of the Encyclopedia Britannica to find one missing letter. Incredibly, they were able to get conclusive results on eight of the ten embryos. Of those eight, four were affected with the BRCA1 gene and four were not - exactly the rate of incidence of the gene. My fertility doctor then implanted the most viable embryos that were unaffected with the BRCA1 gene, and nine days later, I received the wonderful news that I was pregnant!

In December 2006, I gave birth to a healthy baby girl, who I named EveHelena (Chava Chaya), after my mother, Helen Evelyn (Chaya Chava). As planned, I had my oophorectomy about a year after she was born. As a cancer survivor, assuming that I was even lucky enough to be able to conceive, I had always struggled with the competing desires to experience bringing another life into this world and the fear that this life would have to endure the same awful disease that my mother, my aunt, and I had endured. With the help of my dedicated medical team and a little help from above, I was able to make my dream of becoming a mother a reality. When Eve is old enough, I look forward to telling her the story of how she was conceived and how blessed she truly is.

Deena Kobell

To read other inspiring stories included in our new booklet, *Our Voices: Inspiring Words from the Women of Sharsheret*, please visit www.sharsheret.org or call (866) 474-2774 to order a free copy of *Our Voices* and other booklets in the Sharsheret Resource Series.

SHARSHERET'S ANNUAL BENEFIT LUNCHEON



Sharsheret would like to thank everyone who contributed to making this year's **Annual Benefit Luncheon** a tremendous success. The Luncheon, held on Sunday, May 18, 2008, honored more than 400 mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends who have touched the lives of breast cancer survivors at the Marriott Glenpointe in Teaneck, New Jersey. Sharsheret recognized the meaningful contributions of **Rifky Atkin** (pictured left), Guest of Honor, and named **Sirena Silber** this year's recipient of the Lisa Altman Volunteer Tribute Award. **Save The Date: 2009 Sharsheret Annual Benefit Luncheon, Sunday, May 17, 2009!**

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JOIN SHARSHERET'S NATIONAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



Sharsheret honored local volunteers (pictured left to right) **Suzanna Breit**, **Sharon Wieder**, and **Sharona Schochet** at the Volunteer Center of Bergen County's Celebrate Volunteers recognition event during National Volunteer Appreciation Week in April. Sharsheret would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of the volunteers who selflessly give their time to provide invaluable support for our programs and services on the national and local levels. A special thank you to Gila Pfeffer and Tamar Loheit (Edison, New Jersey) for organizing a series of fundraising events in support of Sharsheret. To become a Sharsheret Volunteer, please e-mail rschwartz@sharsheret.org or call (866) 474-2774.

ISRAEL CANCER RESEARCH FUND TO HONOR FOUNDER ROCHELLE SHORETZ



Sharsheret Founder and Board President **Rochelle Shoretz** will be honored at the 2008 Women of Action Luncheon of the Israel Cancer Research Fund in New York City this June. The Israel Cancer Research Fund is the only voluntary charitable organization in North America solely devoted to supporting cancer research in Israel. Other honorees include Hoda Kotb, Co-Author, Today Show, NBC, Judith Eigen Sarna, Philanthropist, activist, and designer, and Barbara Lerner Spectre, Founding Director of PAIDEA, the European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden

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