

INTERNATIONAL BREAST CANCER PADDLERS' COMMISSION



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Dragon Boating for Survivors Established in Istanbul

By: Jane Frost, President, IBCPC
Vancouver, B.C. Canada



In my role as President of IBCPC last July, I received an email from a gentleman named Cengiz Unutmaz in Istanbul, Turkey. He told me he wanted to start a breast cancer dragon boat team because his girlfriend had just been through treatment and he wanted to do something to support people who were living with the disease. He had decided on dragon boating because he had seen a team of Canadian breast cancer paddlers when they were in Istanbul. He went on to tell me he wanted to have his team ready to paddle, six weeks from when he made contact with me. Needless to say I had to slow him down somewhat.

Cengiz has been true to his dream and has done a remarkable job of pulling a support group and paddlers together. Recently one of my work colleagues, Paul Patterson, was going to Istanbul so I took the opportunity to put the two men in touch with each other. Paul's only experience with breast cancer has been listening to me go on and on about the breast cancer movement. On the following page is his account of his meeting with Cengiz.

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With the minarets of Istanbul in the distance, from left to right, Hakan Yayuz, Tatsiana Krasouskaya, and Cengiz Unutmaz.

Meeting the Force behind “Pink Paddles”

By: Paul Patterson
Canadian Visitor to Turkey

The day, as with all days in Istanbul, begins early with the sound of the call to prayer rolling up the hillside to announce the coming of dawn. The adhan, or call to prayer, brings Muslims together in communion and into community and speaks to the human instinct to join together to share and support each other. In this spirit and over a leisurely lunch of various Turkish fish dishes, salads, cheeses, olives and bread, Tatsiana Krasouskaya, Hakan Yayuz and Cengiz Unutmaz introduced me to their particular form of community building and to the community they hope to serve. These three constitute the motive force behind what will become Istanbul’s first Dragon Boat team for breast cancer survivors, “The Pink Paddles”, and what they believe will become part of the international initiative in support of women’s health in general and that of breast cancer survivors in particular.

Tatsiana, originally from Belarus and Hakan, Turkish by birth, form one half of the partnership. Their combined skills and experience, Tatsiana is a journalist and writer and Hakan a former world ranked rower are co-collaborators in bringing dragon boat racing to Istanbul. In the space of 5 years their dragon boat festival, Kurumlararasi Dragon Festivali, has grown from 40 competing teams in the first year to upwards of 60 teams last year. Their remarkable efforts and the equally remarkable results prompted them to extend their view beyond corporate and community dragon boating to try and realize an opportunity to do something more for the larger community. Their friend Cengiz, whose partner of the last 7 years is a breast cancer survivor, provided them with an outlet for that broader view on their work.

Cengiz, like many who have supported and loved a partner through a health crisis, in this case a diagnosis of breast cancer, looked for ways in which he could do

more than simply provide a steady shoulder and a loving heart. As he watched his partner struggle with issues related to self-esteem, a sudden mistrust of her body and her own capacities, and of feelings of loss, both of control and of self-determination, Cengiz drew a direct connection between physical wellness and emotional and mental wellness. His response became obvious and after careful research he connected up with the American College of Sport Medicine to “import” their highly regarded physical rehabilitation program to Turkey for use by women in general but more specifically for survivors of breast cancer. Initially Cengiz will work with 20 women at a time, with new intakes every 3-4 months and he hopes to have his first dragon boat team competition-ready by April/May of 2013.

When the connection between Tatsiana and Hakan’s dragon boating organization and Cengiz’s exercise and rehabilitation program was initially envisioned, all three saw dragon boating for breast cancer survivors as the perfect vehicle for exponentially increasing their effectiveness through partnership. All three understood the value in harnessing the energy found within a community of women survivors when placed within the context of healthy fun competition. Their shared vision of doing more to support their communities, friends, sisters, mothers, daughters and wives to reclaim their spirit and their sense of self and to re-engage with their own lives is made manifest in what they hope will become a national dragon boating organization for breast cancer survivors, and eventually, a part of the international organization. Thus was born the “Pink Paddles” of Istanbul and eventually, Turkey.

Please look for them on Facebook as “Kurumlararasi Dragon Festivali” or at their webpage, www.dragonfestivali.com. Good luck and straight lines Pink Paddles.

Introducing Italy's National Representatives

As new teams join the IBCPC, the Steering Committee is working with these teams to appoint a representative(s) who will liaise between the country's team(s) and the IBCPC. Being active in their respective communities these individuals will ensure strong communication channels to and from the IBCPC.

Maria Grazia Punzo, Rome, Italy

Forty-nine year old Maria Grazia is a ten year breast cancer survivor. As a consultant and project manager in the information technology industry she works on projects for governance and telecommunications. Before her diagnosis, she had not had any health issues as work kept her very busy. She dedicated very little time to herself and her wellness.

Cancer knocked on Maria Grazia's doorstep just two months after the death of her mother. She says her cancer story is like many other women's: full of fear, despair, darkness, tears, no hope and no life plan because the disease took away all her energy. Then in 2008, she attended a meeting with team Pink Butterfly in Rome. Here she met Orlanda Cappelli, the remarkable woman who began the breast cancer dragon boat movement in Italy after paddling with an International Abreast team in Rome in 2002. That crew had representatives from Australia, Canada and the United States. When Orlanda heard about the breast cancer paddling team she asked if she could drum for them. They had to tell Orlanda the criteria for drumming was two fold: experience as a drummer and a diagnosis of breast cancer. She had both and instantly became their drummer.

Maria Grazia will never forget Orlanda who was successful in spreading the message of hope to breast cancer survivors in Italy. From that point on Maria Grazia thought about cancer differently. The disease became an opportunity to play sports, to travel, to plan and to share without words. Wearing a pink shirt and picking up a paddle was not easy as few of her friends, and none of her colleagues, knew about her cancer. Pink Butterfly brought her out of her isolation and she became proud to be part of this powerful movement of courageous women.

In 2009 in Venice Maria Grazia met Forza Rosa, a Canadian breast cancer dragon boat team who had come to Italy to support the Italian women. She realized how important it was to spread the message; so was born Forza Rosa, the Italian movement of breast cancer survivors who paddle in all types of vessels: dragon boats, outriggers, and kayaks. Maria Grazia's dream is to paint Italy Pink. She wants to see each Italian city with a point of reference for all paddling women who, like her, faced breast cancer and need to see "after" in order to see the light at the end of the cancer darkness.

Milena Vacirca, Florence, Italy

Milena was born fifty years ago in Siracusa, Italy. After high school she moved to Catania where she attended university. Then on to Florence where she met and married her wonderful husband, Massimo. They have two children and her son Mario came with Milena to the IBCPC Peterborough Festival in Canada in 2010.

When Milena was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2005 she had a difficult time explaining the illness to her children who were still very young. When, in 2006, Milena joined the Florence Dragon Lady team her family was pleased to see her active and happy again. She has been a member ever since. The team had been together for just six months when she joined so today she is one of the oldest participating members.

Milena has been a driving force in starting new teams in Italy and has been working with the IBCPC since 2010. She has hosted Canadian teams in Florence and paddled with other Italian and international teams in Venice's Vogalonga. She is also the Italian representative of the Pink Ladies Commission, called Pink Dragon's Wings, of the Italian Dragon Boat Federation and now one of two Italian representatives for the IBCPC.

She enjoys being with her teammates because they are energetic and love to organise events that represent their mission to raise awareness about the benefits of exercise, especially paddling, to ensure an healthy life after diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer. The Florence Dragon Ladies have a very good time together especially as they meet and develop new friendships with other Italian teams.

Like many women Orlanda Cappelli who founded the breast cancer dragon boat movement in Italy after paddling with the International Abreast team in Rome in 2002, was the source of hope and inspiration for Mara Grazia Punzo when she was diagnosed with cancer.



Orlanda Cappelli

What's Your Opinion?

Views on this matter or others, please forward them to: newsletter@ibcpc.com

“to insist our steersperson or sweep must be a breast cancer survivor in certain kinds of racing is doing a disservice to our members”

Linda Kuska, Rowbust Breast Cancer Survivor Team,
London, Ontario, Canada

I am writing about IBCPC insisting steersperson or sweeps for breast cancer paddling teams are breast cancer survivors. According to the IBCPC By-Law “Paddler” means a person who has been diagnosed with breast cancer and who is one member of a crew and includes the Crew’s drummer and steersperson.

One of the major reasons to which I object is that breast cancer survivors mainly want to paddle!! That is what we want to do and that is what the best health benefits are for us. The latest research is showing that reoccurrence rates are decreased by 67% by exercising and paddling is perfect for that! So why would we make a breast cancer survivor steer instead of paddle? The reason dragon boating was founded in the first place was because of the benefits of paddling. Steering the boat is still being part of the team but it does not have the health benefits that paddling does. So, to insist our steersperson or sweep must be a breast cancer survivor in certain kinds of racing is doing a disservice to our members.

The other huge reason is safety. You cannot have just anyone steer a dragon boat. You must have experienced steerspersons because they are responsible for the entire crew and their safety of everyone on the boat and on the water. This is not to say that there are not some very experienced breast cancer steerspersons who are very safe but this is not attainable for most teams and this is causing some teams to not attend some events because of this ruling. We must keep our members safe, especially now that we are competing in more festivals that have varied race course lengths. Racing in a two thousand meter race is much different than racing in a 500 meter race and the risk to the crews in all of the boats on the water is increased when racing these. We must have an experienced steersperson on all of our boats. No one should be put into harms way because of a rule.

Canada is a world leader in dragon boating and especially BCS dragon boating, let’s show everyone that we are forward thinkers and are willing to change this ruling.

“having all BCS race teams consisting of members who have had breast cancer, not only levels the playing field, but gives hope and opportunity for other team members to contribute to the team in ways that emphasize their strengths and minimizes their incapacities”

Kathy Levy, Knot A Breast
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

I have a rather differing opinion in regards to this subject. Firstly, there is no doubt exercise plays a very prominent part in the overall health and disposition of people with chronic disease. Dr. Don McKenzie was the first researcher to explore the effects of upper limb exercise on breast cancer patients. His subjects, who had surgical and radiation intervention and who were previously warned not to do upper extremity exercise for fear of promoting lymphadenopathy, willingly participated in this sport and disproved the basis for such fears. They also demonstrated an overall improvement in well being and perspective. He, a past Olympic canoeist, chose paddling. He could get twenty subjects in the boat at once doing the same activity, but any upper limb exercises has been shown to have similar positive outcomes.

Secondly, many other studies have since proven that any exercise, “aerobic” or “anaerobic”, has similar beneficial

effects on patients with cancer and other chronic and debilitating illnesses. The steersperson may not be experiencing the same aerobic exercise benefits as the paddlers, but theirs is a strenuous anaerobic effort that requires them to stay fit on and off the water and is thus just as advantageous to their health and well being. It also has benefits for lower extremity and core strengthening.

Thirdly, to say breast cancer survivor joins a dragon boat team “just to paddle”, negates all the other positive reasons for being a part of such a team. A breast cancer dragon boat team is a floating support group, with members being part of a supportive cohesive group on land and being athletes on the water. Like any team, there are different positions and roles that members play, each being an important part of the teams overall success, and that interdependency gives each member a feeling of belonging and contributing to any success

the team may have. In dragon boating, the drummer and the steers bring elements to the team that it could not succeed without. Thus they are an instrumental part of that team. I believe that a BCS can be trained in these valuable positions just as a paddler trains to paddle their best at paddling.

The unique characteristic of BCS teams is that it is made up of team members who are experiencing different levels of wellness and may have limitations that keep them from fulfilling one role on the team but still permits them to fill other roles of equal importance. That not only allows them to still be a contributing part of the team but also permits them to share equally in its success, in spite of their limita-

tions. This “feeling” of “team”, “membership”, “support”, “camaraderie” is all part of the intangibles that make recurrence rates fewer amongst members of such teams.

Finally, I feel having all BCS race teams consisting of members who have had breast cancer, not only levels the playing field, but gives hope and opportunity for other team members to contribute to the team in ways that emphasize their strengths and minimizes their incapacities. All teams, since the Peterborough event, are aware the steers and drummers need to be BCS on the racing teams. There is plenty of time for each team to train people for these valuable positions and I for one think that it totally obtainable.

“It became obvious our key message of a full and active life after treatment for breast cancer was more powerful when we could say everyone in our boat has had breast cancer.”

Jane Frost, President, IBCPC
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

As you may know I was on the first breast cancer dragon boat in Vancouver in 1996 and Eleanor Nielsen was the person who initiated the Dragons Abreast Toronto team at about that time. I mention this because we now have a good deal of experience in watching this movement grow and progress to where we are today.

It became obvious our key message of a full and active life after treatment for breast cancer was more powerful when we could say everyone in our boat has had breast cancer. We also wanted to be self sufficient and not have to rely on an ‘able bodied person’ to steer us. It was with great delight when we asked our paddlers if anyone would like to steer we had several volunteers. Since that time many of our paddlers have come forward to steer and each year there are a few more.

We share your concern about safety and I can assure you no one steers any of our crews who has not been

properly trained. Each year clubs here in Vancouver hold training courses for steers and also there are practices before races that are intended to ensure the steers for each crew are appropriately trained and experienced. IBCPC festivals have always had experienced steers able to join crews that do not have their own experienced steers. I know Sarasota is planning to do the same at our IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival in 2014. This is an important part of what we are about.

When we held Ten Years Abreast in Vancouver in 2005 we organized a group of steers for those teams that did not have survivors steering. Some teams did not like this approach and some still do not. That has not changed our view that we want to be able to say to the world when we hold these festivals that everyone in those boats is a person who has been diagnosed and treated for breast cancer. It is a powerful message.

“a breast cancer team steered by the coach in a race against others steering themselves, somehow just doesn’t strike me as a fair race and never has “

Eleanor Nielsen, Dragons Abreast
Toronto, Ontario Canada

This is my opinion.

1. I agree the majority of our members want to paddle, but speaking from Dragons Abreast, we have always had a few who only want to steer.

2. If we are to demonstrate ability and achievement following breast cancer, we should be an intact teams of survivors.

3. One of the learnings from Peterborough was that more effort has to go into advance stern training for those in the steering pool at such events. This is already being addressed.

4. There is nothing that says that a well trained member of a breast cancer teams cannot be as competent a stern as any other person. Women’s non-breast cancer crews are required to provide their own sterns and they manage it well.

5. Much and all as I love our coaches, the sight of a breast cancer team steered by the coach in a race against others steering themselves, somehow just doesn’t strike me as a fair race and never has.

Dear Dr. Don:

Getting your Questions Answered

Dr Don McKenzie, founder and coach of the first breast cancer dragon boat team, Abreast In A Boat, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada (1996) does a regular column in this newsletter. Please submit your questions by visiting our website: www.ibcpc.com and click on the newsletter icon.



Question: For people who have been treated for breast cancer and have then experienced some lymphoedema as a result of that treatment, what would you advise them to consider if they would like to participate in dragon boat paddling?

Answer: Breast cancer related lymphoedema is a condition that is still quite common following treatment and deserves assessment by a health care professional. A proper diagnosis is required and contributing factors addressed. Treatment ranges from reassurance to complex therapies on a daily basis. There are several publications that demonstrate that physical activity, including resistance training and dragon boat paddling, is not associated with the development of breast cancer related lymphoedema. We have a gym in Vancouver that has supervised exercise in hundreds of women with no documented case of lymphoedema. Regular physical activity is an important ingredient in the recovery from breast cancer and exercise is also recommended in the treatment of lymphoedema.

The woman with lymphoedema who wants to engage in paddling needs to have her conditioned monitored. If not already part of her treatment, a compression sleeve is recommended for weight training as well as paddling. Training should start very gently and progress slowly. At least two months of regular exercise, including weight training, should be completed before starting to paddle. Attention to the technical aspects of paddling is more important than trying to make the boat go fast. One important issue is body composition and weight gain. In my experience gaining weight or being obese is a major risk factor in the development of breast cancer related lymphoedema. For that reason exercise and nutrition are important for both paddling and management of lymphoedema.

Paddling: What it's all about

In an article titled "First Class: Dragon Boating" by April Lim and appearing in Lifestyler magazine, the author describes for the novice the basics of learning to paddle a dragon boat.

When it comes to dragon boating you are always performing as a team. You win together and when you go down, you go down together – literally. Who knew the camaraderie among a team would strengthen when their boat capsizes in the middle of Humber Bay?

Timing and communication are key in dragon boating, and each stroke counts. The technical stroke takes a lot of practice to master, let alone learn. There are stroke variations, but the four main stages of a dragon boat stroke are: the reach, the catch, the pull and the exit. The reach is the setup when a paddler extends the paddle in front, as far as possible above the water. The catch is when the paddle forcefully enters the water until the blade is fully submerged. The pull is when the paddle is dragged straight back through the water. And lastly, the exit is

when the paddle is removed from the water and returned to the reach position. Repeat this cycle for an hour-long practice and you have one heck of an arm workout.

I remember waking up the next morning after practice and not being able to pour my cereal.* But it's not just about the upper body. You use your legs too as a springboard, and your core is engaged from the reach until the exit. It's like doing a crunch every stroke. Plus, it's a great cardio workout; you need the stamina to last without sacrificing your form. Once your form starts getting sloppy, your timing goes awry, and subsequently you start throwing off the paddlers behind you who are trying to match the timing of your stroke. www.lifestylermag.com

*Editor's Note: Breast cancer paddlers will have spent three months dry land training before their first on-the-water dragon boat practice.

Why the excitement? Why the fuss? Why Sarasota 2014?

By: Jenny Yule, Abreast In A Boat
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Carol Mutton, Survivors Abreast
Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

The story begins in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in 1996 with the launching by Dr. Don McKenzie of a breast cancer dragon boat team, Abreast In A Boat. A decade later, Abreast In A Boat invited breast cancer dragon boat teams from Canada and also from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Poland and Singapore where the sport had now spread, to Vancouver to share in its celebration of 'Ten Years Abreast.' They hoped some would come and were amazed when in June 2005, over 1800 paddlers and their families and friends said YES!

For three fabulous fun filled days they celebrated on the land and on the water. They paddled, laughed, danced, talked, shopped, listened, learned, supported, sang and even paraded in their fuchsia boas. And they shed a tear both for those who were no longer paddling and for the joy and happiness of sharing the wonderful adventure together.

The Australians caught the spirit; they announced at the Closing Ceremony they would hold a similar Festival, and a tradition was born. In September 2007, participating teams at Caloundra, Queensland agreed these Festivals, characterized by their inclusiveness and camaraderie, should continue. No matter how well or ill you are, or how well you paddle, you are encouraged to get in the boat and participate, a winner when you arrive and leave, for there is no trophy - just the experience, the forming and renewal of friendships, laughter, tears and a boatful of memories.

The IBCPC was charged with drawing up a process for the selection of the next Festival venue and Peterborough, Ontario Canada was chosen. In June 2010 breast cancer paddlers, seventy three teams in all, and their supporters from around the world won the hearts of that small city. Together the community and their International visitors painted the town hot pink as they paraded, paddled, celebrated. They left an indelible print

best summed up in an editorial in the local newspaper 'Live a joyful life. Do it every day, for as many or as few days as you have. You don't have to be a dragon boater to live joyfully, but we thank them for the demonstration.' The Festival continued the tradition of The Sandy Smith Global Race in which eight international boats consisting of two representatives from each participating team paddled together ending with the ceremony of Flowers on the Water.

And now to 2014. The next IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival will be held in Sarasota, Florida, USA from October 24 - 26, 2014, inclusive. Building on the spirit and traditions established in Vancouver, Caloundra and Peterborough, it will be a global event with a local touch. Sarasota, half way between Tampa and Miami, offers an intimate small town feeling with a generous helping of southern hospitality and a spacious venue for racing, workshops, skill training and celebration.

The host teams, the Pink Dragon Ladies of Tampa Bay and Save our Sisters of Miami have just launched the Festival's website. www.sarasotabcs2014festival.org It includes details about registration, hotels, transportation, Festival activities and local attractions. Also, you can follow the ramp up to Sarasota 2014 on their Facebook page.

Early bird registration will open April 1, 2013 and the first fifty teams to register will receive a reduced entrance fee. Registration can be done electronically but will not be accepted until the registration fee has been received by the Sarasota Committee.

Your team must be a member of the IBCPC to register. Check it out at www.ibcpc.com

And now you know Why the excitement? Why the fuss? and definitely Why the must!



 **October 24-26, 2014, Sarasota, Florida, USA**
IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival
www.teamsosmiami.com

Dragon Boating Expands in Italy

By: Tina Scorda,
Guastalla, Province of Reggio Emilia, Italy

Over the past year Italy has welcomed three new breast cancer survivor teams: Pink Sirens of Chioggia, (Venice), Clover Rose, Mestre, (Venice) and Pink Amazon, Pavia \ Milan. The Pink Sirens and Clover Rose both train in the Lagoon of Venice, whereas Pink Amazon divide their practices between Ticino River in Pavia and Milan's Idroscalo.

Pink Sirens and Clover Rose were born as a result of a meeting organized by Lega Italiana per la Lotta ai Tumori (LILT). LILT is the Italian national federation for the Fight against cancer, to which were invited representatives of the teams Forza Rosa from Veneto, Forza Rosa Donna 2000 and Pink Lioness and Rome's Pink Butterfly. The team, Pink Amazon, was founded by some women from Pavia who participated in events organized by Forza Rosa.

Last June Pink Butterfly representatives went to Milan's Idroscalo and met the women in Pavia and Milan. These women had started training in order to participate in the International Canoe Federation World Dragon Boat Festival in August at Idroscalo Club. The festival was organized by the Italian Federation of Canoeing and the Idroscalo Club with the assistance of the Province of Milan. This was the first time Italy was host to a world dragon boat championship.

This coming spring, May 11 & 12, 2013 Pink Butterfly Rome will celebrate their 10th anniversary. Other events planned

by Pink Butterfly and Forza Rosa will bring awareness to the cities in Italy of Brescia, Bergamo, Trento and Verona.


Tina Scorda is a former member of Abreast In A Boat, Vancouver, Canada and is pictured here with the Canadian Forza Roza team that paddled in Venice's Vogalonga in 2009. Tina lives in Guastalla with her husband, Matteo and their son, Ethan. She returns regularly to Vancouver to visit her family and her dragon boat pals who are Ethan's paddling aunts.




What in the World is Going On?

 **May 9 & 10, 2013 Sea of Galilee, Israel**
The second annual dragon boat festival in Israel will take place this weekend.
www.dragonboatisrael.com

 **May 11 & 12, 2013 Rome, Italy**
Come to Rome and celebrate Pink Butterfly's Ten years of paddling on the beautiful lake of Castel Gandolfo.
info@pinkbutterfly.com

 **May 18 & 19, 2013 Venice, Italy**
Forza Rosa's fourth event on Saturday and Venice's famous Vogalonga for its 39th regatta on Sunday
admin@bucintoro.org and www.vogalonga.com

 **May 24-26, 2013 Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada**
A weekend of paddling, friendship and fitness Acadian style, join 'tit Bateau in celebrating its tenth year. lornaf@nb.sympatico.ca

 **May 25 & 26, 2013 Florence, Italy**
Dragon Boat Pink Meeting. The third annual event being held the week after Venice's Vogalonga www.florencedragonlady.it

 **June 8, 2013 West Windsor, New Jersey, USA**
Paddle for Pink in New Jersey's largest community dragon boat event
lcannon@americanalphainc.com

 **July 24-28, 2013 Szeged, Hungary**
11th International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) World National Championships www.idbf.com

 **September 14 & 15, 2013 Dublin, Ireland**
Plurabelle Paddlers and the Irish Dragon Boat Association will hold its third regatta at the Grand Canal Dock. www.plurabellepaddlers.com

The IBCPC invites teams to post events of interest to paddlers on the above Bulletin Board. To do so email the information to newsletter@ibcpc.com. The IBCPC takes no responsibility for events by reason of the posting. Where travel to another country is involved, teams are advised to consult their respective Government's Travel Advisory.