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Speaker 1 ([00:13](#)):

Automated Transcription

A diagnosis of breast cancer can cause a lifechanging ripple effect of impact, affecting those we love the most and those upon whom we lean, for comfort and strength in the most challenging of times. My name is Aisling Hurley and I'm the CEO of Breast Cancer Ireland and you're listening to More Than A Lump, a podcast that talks openly and honestly to a selection of guests about their very personal connections to breast cancer – be it through their career choice, their own first-hand experience of the disease, or through sharing the experience of close family members. My conversations will centre on how breast cancer has informed their perspective on life, love, family, health, their goals, and aspirations. Although each story is utterly unique, the one common thread that runs through each one, is that breast cancer is more than a lump.

Care Plus is Ireland's leading community pharmacy brand, offering expert advice and services for a healthier and happier you. Find your nearest Care Plus on careplus.ie or follow them on social media for daily health and wellness tips.

([01:09](#)):

Over the past 15 episodes, we've covered a range of topics, sharing personal stories, and covering many of the various challenges that a breast cancer diagnosis can present. In today's episode, we're taking a slightly different approach. We've called this episode **Beauty Beyond Breast Cancer**, and we've invited three women who provide product services and expertise to women diagnosed in the area of skin, hair, and bra fitting to come in and chat to us about what they do and share their insights and to their own experiences of interacting with those diagnosed. With us we have Jennifer Rock, aka The Skin Nerd Yinka Martin, founder of Hairweavon, and Valerie Murphy, Valerie's Breast Care. You're all very welcome to More Than a Lump podcast, and thank you for coming into our studio today to talk to our listeners. I'm gonna start with you, Yinka, because for many women, the loss of their hair due to chemotherapy treatment and the prospect of needing to purchase a wig is the first very real visual manifestation of their breast cancer diagnosis. In our previous episodes, we've heard many of our patients supporters talk of the trauma of hair loss and how they felt some deciding to wear a wig, others not, and for the, and for others. It's just nice to have for special occasions. Yinka talk to us about when a conversation with hair, we even begins in the breast cancer journey,

Speaker 2 ([02:23](#)):

And many clients that come to us at Hair Weave Von would come to us after their first initial diagnosis just to be prepared and have something ready in case they experience hair loss or before the hair starts to fall out. And really our job is to hold their hand and support them through that hair loss journey. And just in a more modern way, reassure our clients that we have their back when it comes to the whole hair situation. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> too many of our clients tell us that they would tell the oncologist, you know, I'll take any kind of medication, any kind of treatment, I just do not want to lose my hair. And we

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hear that so often. So really our job is to, is to give them a big hug mm-hmm. <Affirmative> virtually or in person and just reassure them that we have this hair thing covered, you know? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you can still look yourself.

Speaker 1 ([03:28](#)):

Exactly. Cause they, you know, especially if you've had a mastectomy, you know, the femininity part, you know, you're losing your hair through chemotherapy, eyelashes, eyebrows, you know, it is part of that. Trying to bring that back again. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, how did you get into this business?

Speaker 2 ([03:41](#)):

I started Hairweavon because I had struggled with my own hair, hair loss and being a woman of black origin alternative hair is very much part of our identity and our heritage. Most black women wear wigs, hair pieces because we have hair problems. So I was very familiar with hair and alternative hair, but growing up in Ireland, I just struggled to find suppliers of really good quality wigs in hair pieces that looked real. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> felt real and that nobody would tell I was wearing a hairpiece mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. And growing up as a young woman in the professional world, you just wanted to look the part and you didn't want to be checking in on your hair every couple of hours or, you know, brushing it and making sure that it looked well. So out of my own personal interest and frustration I decided to start a hair company.

([04:43](#)):

Mm-hmm. <Affirmative> source and hair, real hair, and going out to Asia to find manufacturing partners to help me start my hair company. Good. but in the process of launching this hair company, initially a hair extensions company, we started getting requests from women coming in and asking us to make a wig for their mom or for their sister, or someone who's had long-term alopecia and who had had the same struggles as I'd had for so many years coming in the door. So within the year of starting my company 11 years ago, we really became a hair loss solutions company. Super.

Speaker 1 ([05:21](#)):

Wow. That's fantastic. Moving to you, Valerie, you interact with women who have had breast surgery every day. You provide them with prosthesis, mastectomy, brass, and swimwear. Perhaps you could give our listeners a sense of first of all, how you got into this space and also just your experiences to date.

Speaker 3 ([05:37](#)):

Great. thank you Ling and thanks for inviting me here today. So we were living in Texas back in 2012 myself, my husband and the kids. And I was a volunteer at a breast cancer resource center, and one day I met a lady who'd had a visit from her mastectomy fitter that morning. And I was intrigued by the, the whole experience that she had and what she told me, and I just thought I would love to do that mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. And so I was really lucky in that I got all my training in Texas and I, you know, I put the work into it over there and met with a lot of different people. And then I came back within a year and I set up in Limerick, and I look after women in the Limerick area in the Midwest.

([06:17](#)):

I go up to, to Galway and I, I do all around the, the surrounding counties. Yeah. and I'm online as well, so I, I work with women now you know, through FaceTime and online, and it's, it's, it's changed a lot in the last 10 years actually, since I started the service. But I love it. I'm passionate about it. It's just for me from

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the beginning, it's all about making and helping women to feel beautiful again after surgery. Mm. And it's, it's the fashion I come at it always from the fashion side. Mm. So that's how, that's how I got into it and that's where I am with it. Yes.

Speaker 1 ([06:51](#)):

Brilliant. And so I, you see women probably every day who are looking to have a fitting or looking to see, you know, what's the best that you can source for them.

Speaker 3 ([07:00](#)):

There's, and there's a lot actually for women, and I think Ireland is particularly good. We, we have a lot of different suppliers that we can, you know, we, there's quite a lot of mastectomy shops around the country actually. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and I work very closely with two other mastectomy shops. Carlin's Breast Care and Breast Care by Allison. We actually covered the country between the three of us. Oh, wow. You know, so we have many suppliers. I mean, there's nothing you can't get. There really isn't. And no woman should, you know, have to feel that she has to wear something different just because she's had surgery. There. There are so many different things that you can wear and like from the swimwear to tops to, you know like the, like between us there, there's everything you can get and everything that can help the women to feel really good about themselves. They shouldn't have to compromise mm-hmm.

Speaker 1 ([07:48](#)):

<Affirmative> mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. And I suppose for, for, for women who contact you, what's their fir their initial fear? I suppose the fear is, you know, how can I look myself again?

Speaker 3 ([07:56](#)):

Absolutely. And you know, I think with women, ideally they should contact before they have surgery, because I think when they have the surgery, it can be quite daunting. And if they have the information before the surgery, it can really help. And I think you know, in case touched on that as well you know, to have that consultation maybe beforehand to get the facts and it, it then it's not so hard once you've had the surgery. Yeah. because for me, like a lot of women will go in, have the surgery, and then they'll get the bras, whereas ideally it's better to have the bra a front fascinating comfortable bra when you go into the hospital and have something soft like a softy prosthesis to where inside the bra, and it'll make you feel better straight away, you know? Well, it'll help to make you feel better straight away. Yeah. you know, instead of waiting for the several weeks later when you're getting, when

Speaker 1 ([08:48](#)):

You're quite sore afterwards.

Speaker 3 ([08:49](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, so I think that, that's important is to have that information and it's just about letting people know what, what exists and what what's out there for them. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([08:57](#)):

And you mentioned one of your youngest clients was a, a girl of 23.

Speaker 3 ([09:02](#)):

Yes. Yes, that's right. So because I, I work with women so closely and provide them with the prosthesis and the bras and all of that I do a lot of talks and walks and I, and I meet people in the community, and I'm always saying to women like, breast cancer, Ireland is, you know, check your breasts because the younger you are checking your breasts, the better. And it's a really good habit to get into mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. And I think that's really important because you can, you can be in your twenties and it is unusual though, I must say.

Speaker 1 ([09:33](#)):

Yeah, no, it, it is. But you know, we've, we've had certain conversations with women and actual fact, a lady I, I interviewed recently for a podcast was 22 when she was diagnosed through our education and outreach programs that we do free of charge around the country. One of our coordinators was at a school presenting to a tdy, so that's fifth year and sixth years. And a sixth year pupil came up to her afterwards and said, I think I have two of those symptoms, 17 years of age. So she was sent for a referral and she has since been, she's undergoing treatment at the moment, very, very, very rare. But yet it does happen. And it is about our breast health awareness sessions are all about just educating women in young girls about just being, understanding good breast health. You know, empowering yourself to know what's normal so that if an abnormality arises, you spot it a lot earlier and your outcome will be a lot more positive, you know? So Thank you very much, Valerie. And moving on, Jennifer, you've been a close friend of Breast Cancer Ireland for several years, coming along to our summer lunches before Covid, talking to our community and donating profits from your cleansing mi during breast cancer awareness month. While I know you're a face facialist and not a dermatologist, your team in the skin nerd have had oncology training. Can you tell me a bit about

Speaker 4 ([10:47](#)):

That? Yeah, of course. So first of all, your story, they're so interesting, honestly, just if side by side and hear it. So what you're talking about with education, with breast cancer Ireland is essentially everything that we represent in the skin nerd. So, my own background is out of a facialist. I suffered on my own skin while I was quite young. We lost quite a lot of people, unfortunately when I was quite young to cancer, not specifically breast cancer. And so when I decided to become a facialist, I always wanted to be associated with charity. So like yourselves, I think it's really important that we use, I suppose, our brand profile to educate. As a result of that. We've had a hundred thousand consultations come through our virtual door. We've always been an online skincare clinic for the last five years. And unfortunately near 10% of those people, it's quite a large number when you think about it.

([11:27](#)):

Have either had cancer, breast cancer, many different types of cancer, but nearly 10% are either going through it or having had had it, which is a large statistics. So for me, it's to ensure that a, I know how to talk about it and manage it and have the empathy and ensure that we have the right knowledge. For me, making sure that we don't give misinformation is nearly as important as the information we do give. And then, so ensuring that my team who are fully quiet, fa, fully qualified facialists have the correct information also. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> the hard parts of my own background. After becoming a facialist, I train people to become beauty therapists across the globe. And so from an accreditation perspective and qualification, a lot of, a lot of beauty therapists, a lot of facialists, a lot of skincare advisors aren't actually insured to give advice during oncology or during, when someone's going through or, or actively has cancer.

(12:11):

And that's the hardest part cuz when you're looking at these people, they probably, like, I see it in unfortunately friends and families that have gone through, you want them to have that minding, that TLC, that little bit of care and that guidance. But from an insurance perspective, many brands won't just won't give it. So that, I suppose alongside having lost people and then making the pledge to kind of give back and use education for more than just skincare and then having done many different consultations and seeing a passion that this was an area that we weren't qualified in. This is an area we didn't know. So quite early on into launching the skin nerd, so my team went on to train with oncology training Ireland. There aren't many accreditation bodies across Europe, the globe even that will allow you to learn what can you use, what can you advise to say to use or not to use.

(12:52):

And, and the empathy piece is large around it. Yeah. Because typically a facialist is coming in because you're concerned at that stage is lines, wrinkles, pigment, which although they really affect a person, they're perhaps slightly more aesthetic driven. And so to understand that the language around how to care for somebody that is in a totally different situation in their life, but yet their skin is sore, tender, irritated. And it might not be the main reason that obviously everything they're going through is larger than that. But in that day for that client, that's the pain that they're feeling. That's the representation, that's who they see in the mirror. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So I think it's, it's hugely important for us that we represent and do our best for that sector as we possibly can.

Speaker 1 (13:28):

Absolutely. So I know when speaking to so many people and especially if they've been through radiation therapy, you know, the skin can have a burning sensation or a redness and they just want it gone and they want that itchiness to go away. So being able to provide advice on a skincare regime, you know, that brings women back into feeling like women, as you say yin, giving them that big hug that they're going to be okay. And that we are here to look after you and bring you back to your, your, your beautiful self.

Speaker 4 (13:54):

I think it's the safe space like you spoke about earlier, whether it's a virtual hog or a time, it's just so with us, the consultation is filled out so we can see it in advance. And so the whole goal of that 30 minutes is that they feel heard and they can explain to us what they want, what they don't want. And being so mindful of budget, always be mindful of budget, don't get me wrong. But when you're going through this, our job isn't to sell. Let's recommend whether you get the products from what or elsewhere. I generally mean it. I don't, we, we don't mind, we just want you to get what you need. But there's very few brands that we can recommend. So it's typically a local pharmacist that will send you to anyway, to have those brands that don't have the irritating ingredients, which I'm sure you're asking about later. But there's a plethora ingredients that you're best not to use. And then a lot of ingredients that we would typically advocate, we'd say not to use during treatment. So there's, there are dos and Don's unfortunately. So our goal, and it's available on our blog, on our website, you don't have to have a consult. You don't need to come to us one to one. We just want you to have that information re readily available I

Speaker 1 (14:48):

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Suppose. And I suppose just know that we're having this conversation. What are your top tips? So for somebody now, be it general, and this is a generalization because of course everybody is different, but generally for people, what do you recommend?

Speaker 4 ([15:00](#)):

So in, if you haven't got, if you're not undergoing treatment to the moment you don't have cancer, we would always be big fans of what we call active skincare. So people will always hear in the media about acids and retinals and antioxidants and essentially ingredients that are small enough that can penetrate into the skin to change a measurable, physical, visible difference at a cellular level. Meaning where the skin cell is made. But for that exact reason, because you don't want to interfere with anything that's happening in the body while someone is undergoing treatment. We would say avoid all of those. So typically every, unfortunately, everything you tend to read about that gets the most air time and press we would say to steer clear of that at the moment. And then really being so simplistic and cleansing the skin to really kind gentle calming ceramides or glycerine or hyaluronic or all key ingredients that actually have them naturally inside your skin.

([15:46](#)):

So we believe in just giving back to the skin what the skin naturally has, and then sbf, because no matter which treatment you're going through, the skin is definitely under tur in turmoil. So we just want the skin to be protected and especially in the area that you're getting your treatment. So it's as simple as that. It's cleansing, moisturizing, and spf that's genuinely it. And that in itself is sometimes all you actually need in skincare, to be honest, our skincare sector has become complicated and saturated by feeling you have to have press loads and you don't. So you can, you can have a very minimalist regime or you can enjoy that regime, but either way it's just those three steps at that stage.

Speaker 1 ([16:18](#)):

Wow, fantastic. How did you get into this

Speaker 4 ([16:22](#)):

Business? So I suffered up my own skin, I suppose, as a teen, similar to what you were talking about earlier with hair loss, I suppose ica that for me, I just, yeah. Suffered on my own skin, became absolutely obsessed, relentlessly persisted to let my parents, let me go to college. They had notions that I would do other careers, which perhaps were pinchable careers back in the day. But here I am. And it was, look, I think if you have a passion, I'm really lucky I see many friends that, you know, go to work and then they look forward to living. Whereas I have to be dragged away from my work. I generally can't stop learning and surrounding myself with like, we've chemists on board now. We have psycho dermatologists that work with me. There's bioTE. So it's, it's phenomenal what people you can surround yourself with when it all came from, from passion of facial. So yeah.

Speaker 1 ([17:04](#)):

And if I circle back to you, Yk, so some of the women that you have helped and you have met over the years of business what's your advice to them, I suppose? Have you got top tips that you adhere to?

Speaker 2 ([17:17](#)):

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What we always say is that a wig might be for you and it may not be for you. We're here to support you and help you find the best solution. We really crawl through all the best all the best manufacturers and, and makers of wigs on this globe mm-hmm. <Affirmative> to really bring the best in our niche industry to the women in Ireland and the women who shop wigs with us on our website. However, a wig is not for everybody. Yeah. some women, unfortunately, it's never going to be your own real hair. And people still find that quite difficult. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> we can find you the best solution that nobody will tell that looks amazing, that looks just like your own hair. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But some people still find it too hot in the summer or for whatever reason.

[\(18:07\)](#):

And really part of our job is often to empower women to feel beautiful with and without a wig. Yeah. If they choose to shave the hair off and go bald or wear a hat that we can provide them with, you know, confidence or help them feel confident without the hair. Some of our team members also suffer hair loss, complete alopecia and have had different medical hair loss. And we make it our business on our social media, on our Instagram live to help people feel represented, to see other women, you know, live in a full life wish, wish a bald head or you know, still doing all the fun fashion stuff. And, and if, if a woman wants to have fun with the wigs as well and try something different, something new where, you know, we really just gauge by what the client wants. Yeah. You

Speaker 1 [\(19:04\)](#):

Know, and how they are feeling in themselves

Speaker 2 [\(19:05\)](#):

And how they're feeling. Yeah. Like often people come into consultations with us and we will leave a good hour, hour and a half because the first half an hour may just be to have a cry and just to talk about it and, and just to have a hug and hear someone listen to you. And then if you want to go ahead and try on wigs or you know, it's really up to the client.

Speaker 1 [\(19:28\)](#):

And it's interesting, I suppose in talking to so many people, and I've spoken to a couple of people recently who've said, you know, that while their chemotherapy was their treatment, unfortunately, so they were going to lose their hair. And they were told that from the start, but it was, at what point do they lose the hair? Do they take control themselves and cut it short and then shave it or do they wait until it falls? And I suppose they're, you know, that they're just things that you have to,

Speaker 2 [\(19:53\)](#):

I think we do see a lot of clients who are hoping and crossing their fingers, no matter what the oncologists, the doctors have told them about losing their hair, they will still hold onto it, onto just to be sure that it will be gone. And it is very traumatic. It's a very difficult experience cuz I know from myself from losing my hair. So we're just, we're just there. You know, we're just here there to support the clients and to make sure that they have the best of alternative hair options. Yeah. at their fingertip, you know, True us, you know

Speaker 1 [\(20:27\)](#):

Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. and in case there any sort of, I know you, you touched on the fun element of that and the joy of having a wig mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, I mean, I suppose from my point of view, I have a sister-in-law who unfortunately did go through cancer treatment and she herself got awake and it was beautiful on her and she felt fabulous when she'd put it on. And if we were going out, she was ready in three minutes and I was ready in a half an hour. That's the joy of having a wig. But I remember her saying, you know, at breakfast time, she'd come down in the morning and the wig would be on and she'd look fabulous and we'd all get up in there, would not even be brushed. And at one point she said to me, Alright, could I take it off? It's really warm and itchy. And I said to her, of course, she said, I won't frighten the kids. And my kids were older. I said, not, but she, and she was beautifully b beautiful bald. But it's just, I suppose it's, it's the, it's the nature of having the wig and human hair. It can, as you said earlier, it can get kind of hot and itchy.

Speaker 2 ([21:18](#)):

It can, but I suppose with modern modern advancement in kind of wig making now there are options of wigs that will be a lot like more lightweight and not as, you know, hot and or itchy and things like that. And that's our job to bring that option to our, the,

Speaker 1 ([21:36](#)):

The new modern technology. Yeah. That's fantastic. Yeah. Wow. And I suppose moving on, Valerie, it is a vocation, the work that you are doing. I mean, you are giving a lot of solace and support to women who are, are going through a very tough time.

Speaker 3 ([21:51](#)):

True. And, you know, being here today and listening to Yinka and listening to Jennifer and listening to yourself as well, and this is what I love about it, because we're all sharing information and then I feel like I would have a lady whom I come to me and she might not have had anything to do with cancer, but now I can, you know, I, because I've been doing this for so long, I can give her all this information. I can talk to her about the, the local week specialist. Or if she doesn't want to go local, she might want to come up to Dublin, you know, or, or you know, wherever she is. I mean, because I deal with so many different counties. And then to talk to Jennifer here today, and you know, I, I know Jennifer's on Instagram, I can refer somebody, I can say, Look, if you're not on Instagram, your daughter might be on Instagram.

([22:37](#)):

Yeah. And, and I love this part of it because this part of, of my, of my work is very important and to be a conduit between the cancer support centers and, and the person that you're dealing with as well. Yeah. Because I, I think you see everyone knows everything, but they don't, and you have to tell them. Yeah. And you have to, you have to really look at the person and think, Okay, this person, they might be of a certain age, they might be online, they might not, like, I would sit down, I'd chat to people and I'd know, I'd know literally a lot about them before I even get the brows. Yeah. Because I, I want to get to know the person and then I need to know what suits them and not just about what they're going to wear, it's about where they are in, in the journey. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, and that's the word. Sometimes people don't like to use as well as the journey, but, but I've just said it there. But anyway. Yeah. the thing is people need to know that the support systems that there, like not just the weak specialist and, and and the skin specialist, but also the cancer support centers and the other supports. Yeah, absolutely. And maybe even to arrange to meet somebody on a one to one, you know, I mean, I've often arranged for one customer to meet another customer. Yeah.

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Speaker 1 ([23:45](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> very

Speaker 3 ([23:45](#)):

Important. It's massive. Yeah. It can, it can make all the difference.

Speaker 1 ([23:48](#)):

Yeah. We've, we've seen that in our patient supporters that we have who are very, you know, or we call them our case studies, but they have different diagnosis and so their different subtype, cancer diagnosis and while they're all, while they are a similar diagnosis, there, treatment plan was completely different because it's now all personalized treatment. But yet putting people in touch with others, I have found be a massive resource. And another thing we found as well is that, you know, when you're talking to somebody, I've had people call me saying, you know, my wife has been diagnosed with a stage four metastatic diagnosis, which is, you know, horrendous diagnosis, God love them. But it's more about, I want them to be able to talk to somebody who can guide them and give them, you know, counseling and help them through this. And we, you know, we had a conversation recently on a podcast with the people from Purple House in Bra and they're an amazing resource because not only will they help the person going through the treatment themselves, but also the family. They get the whole family around and they, you know, explain in as best language as possible and explain to partners and husbands how to help the person through, through the treatment. You know, So it is, you're, you're, you're like Valerie, you're like a walking, talking mobile resource Absolutely. Because you, you, you know, you with the business that you're in and talking to people all the time, I mean, it's a valuable resource for anybody. You

Speaker 3 ([25:03](#)):

Have to love it as well. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And actually, I listened to the podcast that you had with Purple House and I, and I know all about Purple House because my colleague Caroline Caroline's breast Care, she actually works in Purple House. Ah, nice. So like, Ireland can be so small when it comes to something like this and you get to know everybody and, and you can meet at different event events and it's, it's fantastic. It's, and like as like here today, we're all learning from each other and by passing that on to the people who need it, then when they need it mm-hmm. <Affirmative> is, is just great. And I, it makes you feel so much better, you know, as well. It's not just about, you know, having a business, it's about having a service. Yeah, yeah. You

Speaker 1 ([25:40](#)):

Know? Yeah. And being a support.

Speaker 3 ([25:41](#)):

Yes.

Speaker 2 ([25:42](#)):

Like I feel very much that when customer started coming into us asking us to use our hair, you know, the, the hair to make wigs for people who've had cancer diagnosis. I didn't really know much about medical hair loss. I was really afraid to go into this area of, of hair, alternative hair. Cuz initially I was just scared, like I don't really know anything about cancer hair loss or medical hair loss, but I really felt it was a real

colon and I, it didn't take me long to give up all the beauty aspect of the hair extension side of the business and really focus on this. And I felt like I had to go out into the industry and really bring the best of alternative hair back to Ireland to the women that really needed it the most. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and I started my business when I was 24.

[\(26:33\)](#):

and I feel very blessed that at such a young age, I really got to know what my purpose is in life and doing something that's more meaningful and more purposeful mm-hmm. <Affirmative> for women. And I've come to understand, and I think like the rest of you women, really what we do is support women and we're doing it in our own little niche way with the expertise and the knowledge that we have. And I'm, I still continue to learn, I'm learning so much from you guys here today, but I feel very privileged to be doing what I do which is just to support women in whatever I can mm-hmm. <Affirmative> with the knowledge and the resources that I have. Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 1 [\(27:11\)](#):

<Affirmative> and that's what we feel in relation to the more than a alum podcast. It is a, a resource for women supporting women, you know, women understanding and indeed some men, but understanding more about what's available and what is out there to, to help and support them through the, through their treatment plan. And I suppose Jennifer, in your experience, I mean you are dealing, as you said, with this vast amount of queries that come in, but that high percentage of women who are, who are going through a cancer treatment, you build them very strong bond with these wo women.

Speaker 4 [\(27:43\)](#):

I suppose because we're online it probably almost sounds like it's the opposite. But interestingly because people in that specific scenario are so unwell that they can call us from the hospital on the car to, in the car on the way to the hospital anywhere. So yeah, the, the relationship is built up one to one and they work with their nerd over the series and series and we then often tend to, to talk to the sister or talk to them, whether talk to whoever else is around, obviously partners, male partners do, but by and large they jump on consult. So you do get a be relationship because you've been there from beginning the whole way through. So yeah, there's been a lot of moments where we'd have a lot of online events and there's teary eyes. So I think what's interesting for us to remark on is that it doesn't always have to be the physical touch, which would be a typical therapist way of behaving is that you'd need be there tactile, hug mind.

[\(28:27\)](#):

But you can do an awful lot online as well. But to answer your question, yes, I think back to what you're both saying here beside me, that's the bigger why. That's the part. We don't really talk about it online. We don't tend to promote it. It's more word of mouth that it gets out that we do and offer it. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> simply because I suppose it's in our position it's probably, and excuse the pun cause my surname is rock. It's a rock and a hard place that you don't want to promote it because we're not doing it for, we're doing it for the right reasons as I see it. Yeah. So we're not out saying, Oh we do this and my team get time off every year to do different work in hospitals. We teach people how to put their eyebrows back on, how to cleanse your skin properly, how to rebuild your eyelashes and, and so we give that time to the team to make sure that they can mind others. But it's not something that we want to say. I always feel if you're doing something you to do for the right reasons, you're not doing it for anything else. So yeah. So yes, there's definitely beautiful stories. There really are with what we've done

over the last years. But it's because the team is, cuz they want to educate. That's what it is. It's, it's literally passing on information.

Speaker 1 ([29:25](#)):

So Jennifer, you've told us sort of the top tips of what, you know, people shouldn't definitely have in in their, in their skin regime. What are the not to have and not to do? What's that list like?

Speaker 4 ([29:36](#)):

There's, there's, Yeah, it's a really good question. I think the key things are to be aware that your skin is fragile, it's sensitive, it can be inflamed raw. I definitely don't need to tell the listeners that are going through how their skin feels. But by and large what you're trying to do is cool, calm, and a lot of anti-inflammatory ingredients on the skin. So by default we say be very wary of essential oils, albeit they smell lovely fragrance smells divine. I know there's nothing more luxurious than perhaps the thought of putting on a beautiful body cue and minding yourself or a facial cream or a hair product. But by and large they tend to irritate or it can at time sensitize the skin whilst your skin's already what we call photosensitive. So more susceptible to light, which is why that SPF we spoke with earlier is so important. These ingredients can actually heighten that further. So being aware of a lot of alcohol, a lot of fragrance, essential oil. So it is about simplicity in that situation. Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 1 ([30:23](#)):

<Affirmative>. And I suppose yca then, moving back to you at what point in the tr you know, when somebody's going through treatment and chemotherapy and their hair starts to grow back, you know, very fine potentially may not, may have gone from straight to curly or curly to straight. At what point do they then need to stop or do they tend to stop using the wig?

Speaker 2 ([30:45](#)):

It really depends on the client. Some people do not feel comfortable to wear their hair short or curly. They can't figure out how to style it, you know cuz they've been wearing their hair for 20, 30, 40 years a certain way and now it's, it's coming back a different texture mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. so actually some women might continue on with their wig for a while, you know, maybe change up the style to kind of match the way the hair is go going. Or they might up for a hair topper, which would be kind of a clip in hair extensions to give them the added length and volume that they need. And we try and stay away from hair extensions because we don't want to, as a business, we don't want to encourage anything that might snap or affect the the new growing hair. Sure. So we're always about protective hair options mm-hmm. <Affirmative> really, and we always delighted whatever way the hair comes back, just to see our clients with their own hair growing back and nothing can bit your own hair. Absolutely. Growing out of your hair, whatever texture comes back in

Speaker 1 ([31:48](#)):

There is a cost to the service and products that you, that you provide. Ica tell me about the cost in relation to, to the, the wigs that are provided. Yeah,

Speaker 2 ([31:58](#)):

Like wigs, they can be expensive depending on if a clients choose to go for synthetic fiber hair or human hair. But cancer diagnosis can be an expensive thing. So for us, we make it our business to take all the paperwork out of the customer's hands the client's hands. So you don't have to deal with that when you're dealing with so many other things. So we actually have one of our customer service person in house looks after applications to the HSC to, to help customers recoup the cost of purchasing a wig. And there has just been a new PSI scheme as well for those that do not have a medical card. They can also get up to 500 euro tools, the cost of their wig if they have, you know, PSI contributions. So we make it our business to help the customers or our clients choose that process. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> of, of being able to afford what they need.

Speaker 1 ([32:57](#)):

Absolutely. I mean, cuz that's critical. I mean they've been through this trauma mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, I mean the one thing you don't want is it first to cost an exorbitant amount of money mm-hmm. <Affirmative> and at least if there is the resource that you have there saying that you can fill in the paperwork Yeah. And hopefully, and help them to get, get some form of support towards the purchase of the wig. And for you, Valerie, in relation to prosthesis is that an expensive

Speaker 3 ([33:19](#)):

Business? Yeah, again, very like yca, the HSE will cover for the brass and prosthesis for women who have medical cards. Actually the, the first fit at the hospital or, or sometimes with the mastectomy fitter is always free mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. So, so when a lady goes in for surgery, she will get the first prosthesis and the two bras free. And after that then if she has a medical card she can actually you know, apply through the mastectomy fitter. So, so for example, I would take all the documentation again, like take that away from the person. They don't have to deal with it and look after that with the hate toc. And a very important part as well of that is that the health insurance can cover it. Okay. So you know, you might have any of the health insurance companies that you can call them up and find out what you're actually entitled to. Depends again on the you know, the plan that you're on mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. Sure. So, so that covers, and I think that covers for wigs, Correct. Prosthesis, brass swimwear. And with the swimwear for example you know, like I always encourage the customers to get back into the pool to, to swim upper body strength so good. Especially when it's, when it's breast cancer mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. so that's, that can be covered as well through the health insurance and sometimes with the hsc.

Speaker 1 ([34:34](#)):

Okay. That's great. That's a very valuable resource. And I suppose to conclude and wrap up Jennifer, what's your sort of final thing you'd like to say today on the podcast?

Speaker 4 ([34:44](#)):

I suppose the reality, unlike the hair and the prosthetic element is that this, you're in your skin every single day. It's something that women and men are like really want to feel good about their own skin. And it's okay to want to do so whil, you're going through treatment or even after treatment or after having had surgery. If you are ever in doubt, go to a local pharmacy, ask them for advice or if it's still something that's really reoccurring or it's tender, so irritated beyond reason, Obviously see council from your medical team, but there's phenomenal dermatologists that will be able to be available at hand, teach you how to look after your skin longer term because the problems can repeat as in the skin can

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remain tender, can be sensor fears to come in certain areas, pigmentation can be a reality. So just to bear that in mind that there's lots of advice out there in the medical realm that will assist you.

Speaker 1 ([35:27](#)):

Super. Ladies, thank you so much for being with us today. You've shared lots of insightful information for our listeners. I'm sure they'd be delighted. And thank you for joining me today on More Than a Lump podcast. The information in this podcast is based on the personal stories of those we have chatted to. If you are concerned in any way, please contact your GP immediately or you can contact us@breastcancerireland.com.