

# **San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium (SABCS)**

## **4-8 December 2018**

<https://www.sabcs.org/2019-SABCS>

***The 41<sup>st</sup> annual meeting of this prestigious research symposium***

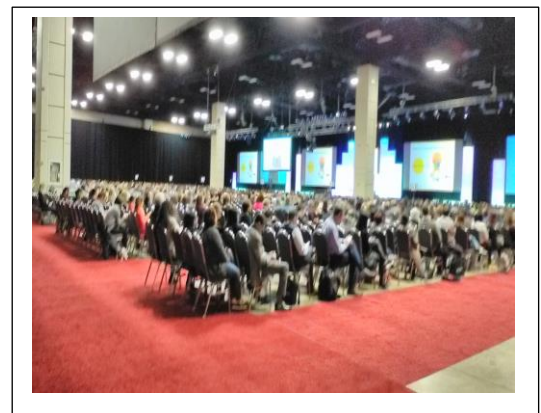
***Since 1977 the symposium's mission has been to provide state-of-the-art information on breast cancer research. It provides a forum for interaction, communication and education for researchers and health professionals, with a special interest in breast cancer. Attendees are from over 90 countries and generally total approximately 7,000.***



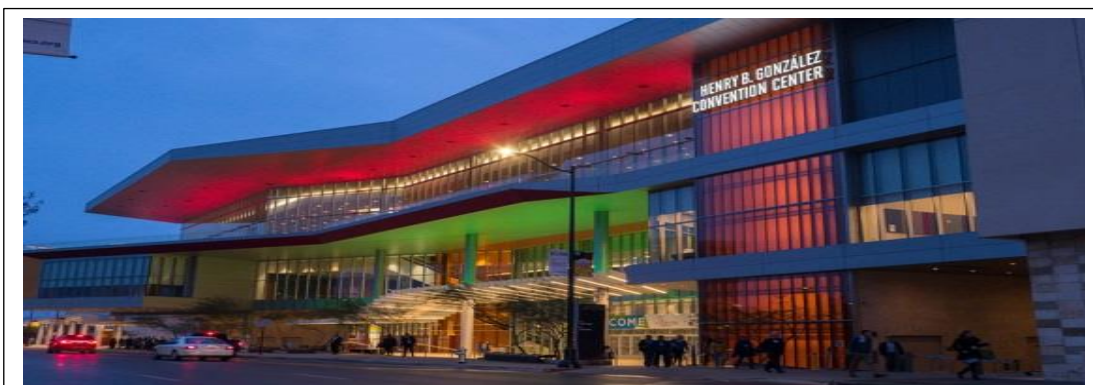
Mission Concepcion, San Antonio



The Alamo, San Antonio



Main Hall, Convention Centre



The Henry B Gonzalez Convention Centre

## The Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation

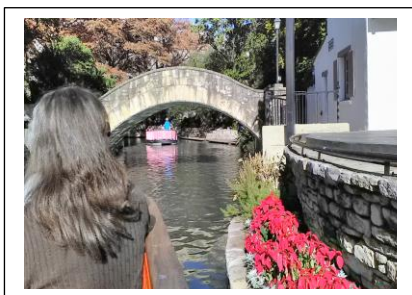
I was privileged to obtain a bursary to attend this superb five day meeting in December last year (2018). I received the bursary from the **Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation, (ABCF)** within their patient advocate programme. [http://alamobreastcancer.org/abcf\\_site/](http://alamobreastcancer.org/abcf_site/) ABCF is a voluntary organisation, the patient advocate programme is 21 years old and was conceived after it was observed that an increasing number of patient advocates were attending the SABCS. This was to enhance their knowledge in order to be more effective as breast cancer advocates. Following this observation it was decided to run a programme alongside the conference and invitations have gone out over the years to representatives from breast cancer advocacy organisations to apply for scholarships (if they meet certain criteria), to attend the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium. To date, the ABCF has provided scholarships to 565 patient advocates.

My aim here in this short report is to give a snapshot of the process and a little on the content.

In conjunction with the intense learning experience at SABCS, patient advocates are provided an opportunity to interact with leading medical experts during daily Hot Topic Mentor Sessions. The panel of experts report on what they determine to be the most compelling research presented that day, and then take questions from the audience. These sessions are the premier event for all advocates attending the SABCS to interact with recognised breast cancer experts in an intimate learning environment. Interest in this programme has grown and more medical professionals now join with the advocates to hear our expert panel discuss the highlights of the day.

**Reporting:** The scholarship advocates are assigned a topic to immerse themselves in during the course of the conference and then have the responsibility of reporting research updates. They are encouraged to network with other advocates, doctors, and researchers to learn all they can from each other.

**The Conference, 2018:** I had decided to have a clear free day on arrival in San Antonio just to get my bearings and shake off some of the jet lag. So glad I did this and the weather was perfect at around 22C, lovely for photographs of the Alamo, possibly the most famous landmark and the delightful River Walk which extends for around 2 miles just below the centre.



The River Walk, downtown San Antonio

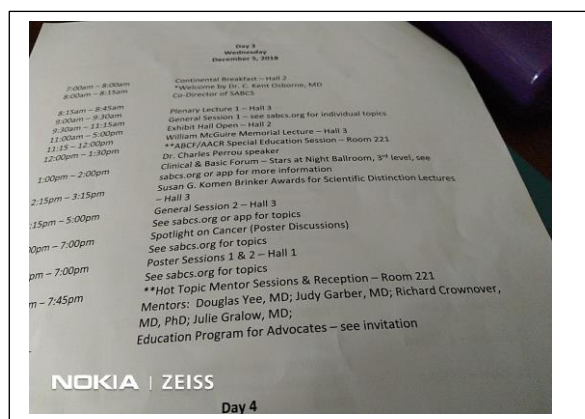
The following day we started in earnest at an orientation meeting where we met the other advocates awarded scholarships this year, around 23 in number, mainly American with a sprinkling of international, there followed a welcome dinner. We were provided with excellent welcome

packs highlighting the advocate programme of events throughout the conference. We also had a lot of contact by email for some time before our attendance with the Advocate Foundation, giving lots of valuable information as to the location, what was expected of us, mentoring and helping us adjust to the whole experience.

Each day started early, between 7-8am with a continental breakfast in the convention centre where the conference was being held. We had a separate room and were therefore able to mingle with the other advocates over breakfast. We were mostly staying in hotels quite close to the convention centre, my hotel was about 15 minutes easy walk, and very good by the way.

There was a superb mix of presentations and the same went for posters on display. Being on the advocate programme there were certain mandatory meetings relating to the programme, but we were able to attend plenty of the educational presentations throughout the conference.

I found it best to plan the day the night before and if possible make a note before arriving in San Antonio of the lectures I was interested in attending.



*One of the evening lectures where advocates were invited to attend. And to the right, a glimpse of a page from the advocates programme.*

Most of the presentations at SABCS focus on the latest clinical and basic research relating to breast cancer, by contrast educational sessions are designed to inform and update those interested in a review on a particular topic.

For example, *Updates in the treatment of triple negative breast cancer*, Updates on Immunotherapy in TNBC, TBNC Current and future directions in metastatic patients.

*Over and under treatment: The Bookends that keep us from getting it right for each patient. Over treatment: First, do no harm. Missed opportunities: the perils of under treatment.*

Some take home messages, words and phrases:

- *Tumour dormancy*
- *Late recurrence accounts for half of post five years breast cancers*
- *Drug for HER2+ T-DM1 – reducing the risk of invasive disease recurrence or death by 50% compared with Trastuzumab – the phase III Katherine trial*
- *“new” drug for hot flushes, Oxybutynin*
- *Chemotherapy, when to use, when not to use*

- *De-escalate*
- *Quote “Genomics will change the future of cancer”*
- *Vaccines for the treatment of BC – ore a way to boost the immune system over the next ten years.*
- *Late recurrence in ER+ - up to 30% will relapse in their lifetime, not clear who will. Need to develop therapies to prevent relapse.*
- *ER+ can relapse decades after initial treatment.*
- *3 types of dormancy: Angiogenic, Immunosurveillance, Cellular*

The days passed by in a flash, so much to take in, so many experiences to digest, so much to discuss, so many new faces/friends.

My experience at the 2019 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium was exceptional; the chance to witness ground breaking science in breast cancer research was second to none. I can highly recommend attendance at this prestigious event and I thank the committee headed by Sandy Stanford, representing the Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation, for giving me this outstanding opportunity.



The class of 2018!