



## Take My Hand by Jo Wiles

Breast Cancer is not a comfortable or preferred topic of conversation. Despite this, many have a need to talk about it – patients undergoing treatment, their families, carers and, not the least, those who have been newly diagnosed. When it comes knocking at the door, and it isn't fussy which one, its message is simple: life can never be the same again. Although the odds of a cure are high in most cases, statistics don't mean much, certainly not in the early stages. Death is the immediate thought, then a fear of dying, perhaps slowly and painfully. Medical professionals are there to explain the treatment, while support groups offer practical assistance, plus advice on ways to cope; but, to the patients who have to go through the ordeal, and those close to them, there seems too much information and not

enough compassion. If only there was someone, a real person able to put it all in simple terms, a face-to-face friend to confide in with something positive to say. In Australia, thanks to The McGrath Foundation, there is, there are – McGrath Breast Care Nurses throughout the country providing very personal and essential guidance to both patients and their families. These are the heroines of Jo Wiles' book, and their stories cast a shining light over the dark side of Breast Cancer.

Jo has selected the reflections of fourteen Breast Care Nurses, and I doubt this would have been an easy choice because they are all so dedicated and worthy of recognition. She opens with "The Journey" of Jane McGrath, the courageous lady responsible for the beginnings of the Foundation. Sadly, Jane did not survive an eventual return of the disease and this might be cause for thinking the rest of the book to be heavy going and depressing. It is quite the opposite. Some tales, certainly, are heart-wrenching and will have readers dipping into the tissues; but the first couple of chapters make it clear that honesty has not been compromised; and the truth, though confronting at times, is the only way to deal with this subject. Jo's unusual style integrates the background circumstances with the words of the nurses, the patients and their family members in a way that had me thinking I was not reading a book at all. I had the feeling I was actually in the room with these people, listening to their concerns, sharing their misgivings, even crying with them. And when sensitive words of positive encouragement gave reason to smile again, I breathed a welcome sigh of relief.

Take My Hand is a moving experience, a series of Journeys I recommend everyone to share and empathise with. Cancer may not have come calling yet, but even if it doesn't, knowing what others are going through and how they have managed to overcome their fears is a lesson we could all do well to learn. For those who have already been diagnosed; for the unfortunates on their second and third round of chemotherapy, and for the lucky ones who have been declared free of the disease but still worry that it might return, Jo's book is a must-read. It is proof that no-one needs to be alone.

As long as there are McGrath Breast Care Nurses, Australians do not have to be. Patients in other countries, however, may not have this advantage, and they do truly need something similar. So, I encourage all visitors to A Season of Happiness to have a read of Jo Wiles' book, then do something positive to help.

Take my Hand is published by Penguin Group (Australia) 2015 - paperback in Australia, or worldwide in eBook format from major online resellers. 10% of all sales is donated to The McGrath Foundation, [www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au](http://www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au)

Two articles on this subject may be of interest:

Focus F01: BREAST CANCER | One Carer's Journey – a look at the effects of Breast Cancer from the viewpoint of a carer.

Focus F06: BREAST CANCER | My New Life with Breast Cancer – 2012 three years after diagnosis.

For a look at some more informative articles on a variety of subjects just return to the webpage



Where every effort has been made to be accurate and fair-minded, comments and opinions expressed on this website are based on personal experience and do not necessarily reflect the views of the wider community or those groups and institutions mentioned. A Season of Happiness and its staff accept no responsibility for any outcome based on suggestions offered. What works for one may not work for others. Please bear this in mind.

Copyright © 2016 All Rights Reserved