



Jill Mull with her mother, Lorraine Schapiro

GENETIC TESTING REVEALED THAT JILL HAD NOT INHERITED A BRCA MUTATION. **THERE WAS NO ANSWER** FOR WHY SHE DEVELOPED BREAST CANCER AT SUCH AN EARLY AGE. WHETHER THERE WERE GENETIC CLUES THAT COULD HAVE PREDICTED AND PREVENTED IT IS THE TYPE OF RESEARCH THE FETTING FUND SUPPORTS.

gram at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center as a patient navigator for newly diagnosed patients with breast cancer. Her focus is on patients under age 50.

Sharing her story brings them hope. They see a survivor in her. She sees a bigger need in them. She has seen too many young women lose their lives to breast cancer, and she yearns for the day when she doesn't have to sit with women as they write letters for their children to open on special occasions in their lives—birthdays, graduations, weddings, births—because their mothers may not be there. For Jill, Fetting Fund research is the key to changing this reality.

“We cut, burn and poison, and even that doesn't always work forever,” says Jill.

Erin Yale is among the women who remind us of the limitations of treatment, even when it is diagnosed early. Erin was supposed to be one of the lucky ones. Her breast cancer was detected in what is considered a curable stage.

In 2012, at age 30, she nursed her newborn baby for the last time before she went to the operating room for a mastectomy. After learning she inherited a BRCA mutation, she had surgery to remove her fallopian tubes and ovaries in 2014 to ward off cancer.

Erin recalled in a video made of her talk at a 2018 Fetting Fund event that, as the years passed, she tried to return to her normal life as a young wife and mother, working in the corporate world and launching Pushing Pink Elephants, a breast cancer awareness and educa-

tion endeavor focused on a better understanding of prevention, health and wellbeing. “Normal,” however is relative, Erin pointed out. “The weight of recurrence never goes away no matter how well you feel.”

Erin had surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy and hormone therapy—everything doctors have in their arsenal to fight breast cancer and still, in 2017 she learned her cancer had returned and spread throughout her body. There would be no cure for Erin, who passed away in 2019 at 38, leaving behind her devoted husband Steve and their 8-year-old-daughter.

Erin, a Fetting Fund advocate, left a powerful message, “Early detection does not necessarily mean survival or better outcomes. I was diagnosed at Stage 2, and it still advanced to the worst stage,” she said. “We can make a difference in the world. We need prevention. We need the Fetting Fund so people don't go through what I went through. I don't want that for my daughter.”

Her call is championed by Fetting, Leslie and Tom, Emily, Carly, Jill and Mike, Lorraine and Mark, and echoed by women and families around the world.

As the Fetting Fund pioneers a new way of thinking about breast cancer care, it is an uphill battle, as the lion's share of research dollars go to study new therapies. Stories like these are inspiring change, however, and the early success of Fetting Fund research shows what is possible through prevention.

ROUGHLY 40,000 WOMEN DIE IN THE UNITED STATES FROM BREAST CANCER EACH YEAR

“We know it will not be easy, but this cannot continue,” says Fetting. “We need the same kind of concerted effort for prevention that has been mounted to treat breast cancer.”

The Fetting Fund is investigating the scientific benefits of natural remedies such as the spice curcumin, broccoli sprouts tea and a magnolia tree extract that may contain properties that detoxify carcinogens or reset the molecular errors that initiate breast cancer. Technological



Erin Yale with her family



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— ERIN YALE, 1981-2019

advances mean we no longer have to wait until a cancer is visible through imaging or a lump can be felt to detect it. New molecular tests that make the invisible visible can detect early changes that precede breast cancer. This includes understanding the connection between genetic and epigenetic (reversible chemical changes to DNA) that contribute to breast and other cancers. Then, injecting anticancer drugs or a drug like tamoxifen directly into the breast ducts could eliminate these changes before a cancer has a chance to grow. Vaccines that train the immune system to patrol and destroy breast cancer cells are another promising area of study. Lifestyle research, such as the role of alcohol in promoting breast cancer development, could yield simple changes that can ward off breast cancer.

“This is just the beginning,” says Leslie. “There is so much promise. I can see it, and I feel that it's going to happen.” ●

THE PATH TOWARD A BETTER WAY

MISSION OF THE JOHN FETTING FUND FOR BREAST CANCER PREVENTION

The mission of the Fetting Fund is to identify the one woman in eight who is at high risk for developing breast cancer in her lifetime and to develop safe, effective natural products and drugs to prevent that breast cancer. Of equal importance, the research supported by the Fetting Fund seeks to identify the seven in eight women who will not develop breast cancer. Medical caregivers will be able to provide more prevention efforts for those at risk and reassure those who are not.

Traditional funding sources are focused on advances in treatment and the quest for a cure for breast cancer. As a result, funding for prevention research has lagged. The Fetting Fund relies on private philanthropy to support pilot prevention studies that will produce results and allow Johns Hopkins prevention scientists to design more substantial research plans and compete successfully for larger grants. Our vision is to support enough high quality pilot studies that our breast cancer scientists will be able to attract funding for a rich portfolio of large breast cancer prevention studies. The Fetting Fund is a catalyst for development of a critical mass of breast cancer prevention science and breast cancer prevention scientists resulting in a world class breast cancer prevention program at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center.

THE JOHN **fettingfund**
FOR BREAST CANCER PREVENTION