

Laura Lee was born in Scotland and trained as an oncology nurse at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. As a clinical nurse specialist at the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh, she administered Maggie Keswick Jencks' chemotherapy treatment when Maggie's breast cancer recurred at the age of 52 in 1993.

During this period, Maggie saw the need for a cancer support centre with a non-clinical and uplifting environment. She developed her ideas by talking with those around her, including people involved in her treatment such as Laura.

In essence, this vision was to ensure that anybody affected by cancer, either personally or as a family member or friend, could visit a Centre, free of charge, to access practical information and psychological and emotional support in order to help them build a life beyond a cancer diagnosis. These Centres would be near to – yet separate from – the hospital where they were receiving treatment. The cancer support specialists within the Centres could work hand in hand with the medical teams, ensuring visitors were able to access integrated cancer care, but in a place with a different and distinctive atmosphere.

Laura and Maggie shared a strong understanding of how Maggie's vision and their combined experience of cancer could have a huge impact on the support provided to people affected by the disease.

By April 1995, Maggie's cancer had returned for a third time and this time she knew that she would not have long to write the blueprint for the first Centre. When Maggie died in July 1995, the necessary groundwork had been done to ensure the first Centre, in Edinburgh, would become a reality and Laura, with the backing of Maggie's husband Charles, took on the responsibility for making Maggie's vision come to fruition. Since then, each new Centre has been uniquely designed by leading architects and landscape gardeners to ensure that visitors would be able to find a 'home from home' beyond the clinical environment of the hospital whilst undergoing treatment for their cancer.

The opening of Maggie's London marks an important step forward for Maggie's as an organisation as it works with NHS Trusts to extend Maggie's network of Cancer Caring Centres into England and Wales.

Laura says "Maggie would be delighted to see how her concept of a Cancer Caring Centre has been embraced by people affected by cancer and healthcare professionals. What started as a pilot project has taken root and is used by people living with cancer up and down the country. It has been a privilege to witness more and more people with the disease getting the support they need to build their lives again. And quite naturally the idea of good design and help for the individual have become woven into everything we do at Maggie's, from our buildings, which have been created by the best architects, to our programme of support, which is designed to the highest standard so that it can meet the needs of each individual who walks through our doors."

Laura lives in London with her husband Hani Gabra, Professor of Medical Oncology at Imperial College, and their three children.

For more information on Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres please visit: www.maggiescentres.org



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maggie's

cancer caring centres

Laura Lee
Maggie's Centres
Chief Executive

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