

Mark Hughes

Former NRL player, Brain Cancer Survivor, Founder of The Mark Hughes Foundation

Mark Hughes is a former professional rugby league footballer who played for the Newcastle Knights. Together with his wife Kirralee, they established The Mark Hughes Foundation (MHF), in 2014, after Mark diagnosed with brain cancer. They quickly realised how underfunded brain cancer was in Australia in comparison to other cancers. Mark's battle with cancer began before he was diagnosed in 2013. There were no symptoms or signs, only initial headaches and blurred visions, which prompted a scan and confirmed a tumour.



The results from the MRI were life changing and the news devastating for Mark and his family. Mark remained positive, underwent brain surgery to successfully remove an avocado sized posterior cerebral tumour at John Hunter Hospital.

Soon after, pathology results came back. Mark had a Grade 3 high grade Oligoastrocytoma, which in non-medical speak means he was fighting for his life. The turning point for Mark was acceptance. Acceptance that he had cancer and acceptance of the challenge to overcome it!

The overwhelming support from family, friends and the community helped Mark to maintain a positive mindset. In August, 2013 he met with medical oncologist, Doctor Helen Wheeler and began six weeks of radiation therapy. In March 2014 he underwent a course of 6 months of chemo medication, followed by a routine follow-up MRI scan which showed no regrowth of the tumour.

He's learnt a few things along the way, one of which is not to put things off anymore. If you want to do something, or achieve something do it now, don't wait... get out the good china - today!

Mark is incredibly indebted to many amazing people that have helped him fight his battles and grow the Foundation to what it is today. His beautiful wife, Kirralee and three beautiful kids, Zac, Dane and Bonnie, are his motivation to tackle cancer with everything he's got.

Mark's mate Matt Callander, lost his battle with brain cancer in 2017, along with close friend Glenn Pallister. Both were the inspiration and reason that the NRL - National Rugby League Beanie Round began and is now one of the biggest charity rounds the NRL has seen.

Kirralee suggested they sell beanies as brain cancer patients wear them to cover scars, bandages, loss of hair and to keep warm. Thus "Beanie for Brain Cancer" was born in 2014.

They have sold over 900,000 beanies and raised millions of dollars for brain cancer research and funded Brain Cancer Care nurses in regional Australia. The annual Beanie Campaign is the major fundraisers and makes a big difference to brain cancer patients and their families today and into the future.

Mark is inspired to work harder to find answers to this disease and make the Beanie for Brain Cancer campaign the biggest and best! He knows that's what Matt would have wanted and promises to make him proud!

To date the Foundation has raised over \$24 million and funded; a Brain Cancer Biobank, Travel Grants, multiple research projects around Australia including three Fellowships and multiple Brain Cancer Care Coordinators.

Mark has accepted that it's a journey and a path he's been given and with that an opportunity to turn something negative into something positive. The Mark Hughes Foundation is a way he can repay those who've helped him and help others in his position.

Mark is still in the fight of his life. He may have won the battle but he's still fighting the war.

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