

The European cancer community has lost one of its most influential voices for breast cancer advocacy. Dr. Mary Buchanan—physician, advocate, and one of the founding figures of [Europa Donna](#) – The European Breast Cancer Coalition—passed away on 18 June 2026.

For more than three decades, Dr Buchanan devoted her career to improving the lives of women and men affected by breast cancer. Those who had the privilege of knowing and working alongside her remember her unwavering dedication to Europa Donna, her remarkable energy for helping others, and her steadfast commitment to ensuring that the needs of people affected by breast cancer remained at the centre of healthcare, education, and public policy.

Building a European Movement for Breast Cancer Advocacy

Dr Buchanan was instrumental in establishing Europa Donna in 1993 alongside the late Gloria Freilich. Together, they laid the foundations for what would become Europe's leading breast cancer advocacy coalition.

From 2000 to 2003, Dr Buchanan served as President of Europa Donna, representing the Coalition in the European Parliament and helping strengthen its position as a leading voice for breast cancer advocacy across Europe. She also co-chaired the European Breast Cancer Conferences together with EUSOMA and EORTC, fostering collaboration between clinicians, researchers, and patient advocates.

Her presidency marked a period of significant growth for the organisation. Driven by her vision and commitment, Europa Donna expanded its reach across Europe and strengthened partnerships with numerous organisations and institutions, including the European Cancer League, the International Union Against Cancer, the Oncology Centre Antwerp, and the Breast International Group (BIG), among many others. Today, the Coalition brings together organisations from 47 countries, a testament to the foundations established during those formative years.

Dr Buchanan was equally committed to empowering patient advocates. At the 5th Europa Donna Pan-European Conference, she helped inaugurate the Coalition's first pilot advocacy training programme. Alongside sessions on diagnosis and treatment, participants attended workshops designed to develop effective communication skills, strengthen engagement with the media, improve dialogue with healthcare professionals, and build lobbying techniques for formal presentations to local governments. What began as a pilot initiative has since evolved into Europa Donna's established annual advocacy training course in Milan, continuing to prepare new generations of advocates across Europe.

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to women's health and advocacy, Dr. Buchanan received the European Woman of Achievement Award from the European Union of Women (UK) in 2001.

EUROPA DONNA FORUM



Breast Cancer

A Career Dedicated to Prevention, Education and Women's Health

Dr Mary Buchanan, MRCS, LRCP, DFSRH, worked in general medical practice from 1964 to 1989, with a particular interest in the health of women and adolescents. She was responsible for the Well Woman Clinic, the Adolescent Clinic, and the Cervical Screening Clinic, where she established cervical and breast screening programmes. Throughout her medical career, she remained committed to prevention, believing that health education, early detection, and screening were fundamental to reducing the burden of cancer.

Her special interest in women's cancers led her to hold numerous leadership positions throughout her distinguished career. She served as Chairman of the Women's Nationwide Cancer Control Campaign, advocating health education programmes for the prevention, early detection, and screening of women's cancers. She also chaired the Cancer Education Group of Great Britain and Ireland and served as the UK's National Representative to the European Commission's Europe Against Cancer Programme.

In 1997, Dr. Buchanan was appointed by the UK's Chief Medical Officer to the Cervical Screening Action Group to review all aspects of cervical screening. Later, she became a Member of the International Affairs Committee of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), where she was recognised as an Emeritus Member in 2011.

Beyond her work in oncology, Dr. Buchanan remained deeply involved with a number of voluntary organisations. She was a Life Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and served as Chairman of the Soroptimist International Convention in 1991. Through Soroptimist International, she also became involved with the World Health Organization, further advancing women's health on the international stage.

An Enduring Legacy

Dr Buchanan was married to Dr John Scott Buchanan, JP, a physicist, who passed away in August 2022.

She will be remembered as a kind, inspiring, and formidable woman whose influence reached far beyond the organisations she served. Throughout her career, she championed prevention, education, screening, and patient advocacy, helping shape a stronger and more united breast cancer community across Europe.

The organisation she helped establish more than three decades ago continues to flourish. Through D. Buchanan's vision, leadership, and tireless dedication, Europa Donna's voice continues to grow, ensuring that the needs of women and men affected by breast cancer remain at the centre of advocacy, research, healthcare policy, and clinical care.

CancerWorld extends its deepest condolences to Dr Buchanan's family, friends, colleagues, and the entire Europa Donna community. Her legacy lives on through the generations of advocates she inspired, the partnerships she forged, and the enduring movement she helped build—one that continues to improve the lives of people affected by breast cancer across Europe.