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A Tribute to Franca Sozzani: Celebrating Five Years of the Franca Sozzani Fund for Preventive Genomics



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by Pakhi Rajesh Kumar Dixit



Franca Sozzani — A Trailblazer

When it comes to fashion and philanthropy, few people carry the weight and stature of Franca Sozzani. An indomitable force in the fashion industry, Sozzani's legacy extends far beyond the glossy pages of *Vogue Italia*, where she served as its iconic editor-in-chief for nearly three decades. Her passionate commitment to creativity, diversity, and social causes has left a lasting mark in the history of fashion journalism.

As an indelible testament to her groundbreaking spirit, one of the most notable issues she curated during her tenure was the "Black Issue" of *Vogue Italia* in July 2008, a bold and iconic edition that aimed to address the lack of diversity in the fashion world. Sozzani was driven to challenge and confront the industry and push for more inclusivity. This issue featured a stunning array of Black supermodels, unprecedented for a high-fashion magazine at the time, and catalyzed a transformative shift in fashion and media for the better.

The Birth of a Visionary Initiative: Where Fashion Meets Science

When Franca Sozzani was diagnosed with a rare form of lung cancer, her son Francesco Carrozzini, a photographer and filmmaker, reached out to Dr. Robert Green, a physician-scientist, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, and Director of the Genomes2People Research Program. Given that Dr. Green directs the first preventive genomics clinic in the U.S., Carrozzini hoped something could be done to save his mother's life. Tragically, by the time of the consultation, it was too late, and the world mourned the loss of this remarkable woman on December 22, 2016.

His mother's passing, and his ongoing conversations with Dr. Green about preventive genomics and its potential to save and extend lives, inspired Carrozzini to embody his mother's innovative spirit and relentless pursuit of challenging status quo, transcending boundaries, and initiating dialogues, but this time between fashion and science. With a strong commitment to honor his mother's memory in a way that would raise awareness about the life-saving potential of preventive genomics, Francesco and Dr. Green, in collaboration with recording artist and investor D.A. Wallach, established the Franca Sozzani Fund for Preventive Genomics in 2018 at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School.

In the words of Carrozzini, **"There is much more in common between a fashion editor and genomics than people think."** The Fund supports Genomes2People (G2P), the scientific initiative driving these efforts. The aim: To save as many lives as possible through the power of preventive genomics, make precision medicine a reality, and bring fashion and science together for a noble cause.

As we celebrate the Fund's remarkable five-year journey, we must recognize how Sozzani's vision continues to shape the landscape of preventive genomics and its impact on healthcare. In Franca's own words, "Fashion isn't really about clothes; it's about life." While fashion represents the beauty of human creativity, genomics holds the key to understanding life's core intricacies. By deciphering our genetic blueprint, preventive genomics empowers us to foresee and thwart potential health threats before they manifest. This proactive approach saves lives and reduces healthcare burdens, fostering a healthier, more resilient society and delivering precision health to everyone.

The Science Behind The Fund

Through various fundraising campaigns, events, and philanthropic exhibitions, the Fund provides vital economic support to the [G2P Research Program](#). Through rigorous scientific research, we are establishing a foundation of evidence for genomic medicine that will accelerate the adoption of novel genomics-based technologies such as newborn genomic sequencing, model new approaches to care, and explore ways for patients, physicians, and consumers to use genomic information to achieve improved health and longevity.

"The ultimate benefits of genomic sequencing are no less than the transformation of medicine itself from a reactive enterprise of treating patients who are already ill to a proactive enterprise of preventing illness before it occurs," emphasizes Dr. Green.

"There's very few of us who go to the doctor because they're healthy and want to stay healthy," Carrozzini adds. **"I speak out of experience, and I say,**

go to the doctors, in general, not only for [genetic] sequencing, just to get checked constantly because it might save your life.”

At its core, this Fund also embodies a commitment to social justice, aiming to create an equitable landscape in the future of medicine. Franca Sozzani's legacy advocating for a better world is in the Fund's DNA: to advance scientific knowledge through awareness, including a platform where patients can share their experiences with genetic sequencing, so that the benefits of this progress are accessible to all.

Driving Awareness and Advocacy: Fashion for Good

Franca Sozzani, an ambassador for Fashion4Development (F4D), believed in fashion's potential for positive change. Last September, F4D hosted its 3rd Annual Sustainable Goals Banquet in NYC, focusing on “Healthier People, Healthier Planet.” Speakers included Italian supermodel Bianca Balti and Dr. Robert Green, who advocated for preventive genomics through genetic screening for informed health choices.

Balti shared her experience with preventive genomics at the event, revealing her BRCA1 gene discovery and subsequent double mastectomy. Her story encouraged others, especially women, to prioritize their health. Francesco Carrozzini emphasized the need for accessible genetic screening programs. Dr. Green further highlighted research suggesting 15% of the audience may have risky DNA mutations, urging a shift from fear to opportunity through genetic testing. The event honored Franca Sozzani's legacy, recognizing the work of Carrozzini and Dr. Green in promoting evidence-based preventive genomics for all.

This Is Just The Beginning!

Franca Sozzani once said, **“Giving back is the new luxury.”** This quote is our North Star, reminding us daily that the Fund is about enhancing lives. As we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Franca Sozzani Fund for Preventive Genomics, we see this as just the beginning. Endless possibilities lie ahead: more research and innovative discoveries, lives awaiting positive impact, and a legacy inspiring generations.

Franca Sozzani’s principle of always paying it forward is at the core of our remarkable work, and what better way than to save lives? As we celebrate this milestone, we honor her memory and reaffirm our commitment to a future where preventive healthcare knows no barriers; a world where healthcare is not just a privilege but a right for all.

Cheers to the future of healthcare; to the future of equitable medicine!

Pakhi Dixit handles social media for Genomes2People, The Franca Sozzani Fund for Preventive Genomics, and the International Consortium on Newborn Sequencing (ICoNS).

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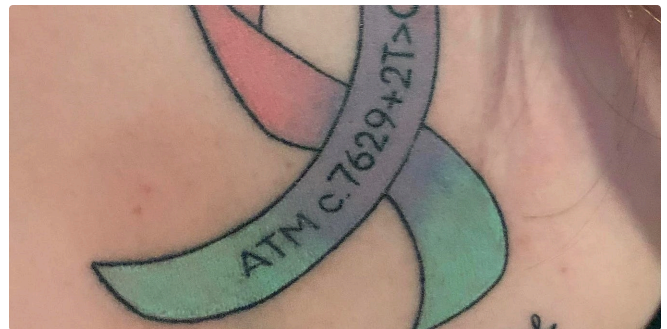
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