

# Heart & Soul

A Newsletter for Supporters of Women's College Hospital

## Changing lives, saving lives

How gifts to the Familial Breast Cancer Research Unit helped an entire family

**WCH genetic counsellors Aletta Poll and Sonia Nanda support women and their families through the tough choices that sometimes arise from genetic testing. "I'm very passionate about my job because we save lives," says Aletta.**



*Aletta Poll (L) and Sonia Nanda*

The knowledge gained from a single genetic test can save lives. In Melissa's case, it might have saved three.

In 2010, after watching a close friend participate in a Women's College Research Institute (WCRI) study, Melissa volunteered to also be tested for the cancer genes BRCA1 and BRCA2. "I did it, not believing for a second I would test positive," she says.

She was wrong. Using a high-tech gene sequencing machine purchased with donor gifts, WCRI clinicians confirmed that the 37-year-old mother of two carries a mutated form of the BRCA2 gene that puts her at increased risk for both breast and ovarian cancer. Melissa inherited the damaged gene from a seemingly unlikely source – her father.

"Men are just as likely as women to carry the BRCA gene mutation," explains Aletta Poll, a genetic counsellor with the Familial Breast Cancer Research Unit. The BRCA genes belong to a class of genes that typically act to protect people from getting cancer. The presence of the mutated BRCA2 gene in Melissa's father meant he was at increased risk for some cancers. A biopsy soon confirmed the family's greatest fear: "Dad had early-stage prostate cancer."

In February 2012, Melissa had a preventive double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery, followed in October by a total hysterectomy. In March 2012, her father had surgery to remove his prostate.

"I felt like I was waiting for a cancer diagnosis," says Melissa of her decision to virtually eliminate her risk of breast and ovarian cancer through surgery. "My doctors helped me understand we all have something waiting for us. The difference is I had the opportunity to take action."

Last year, Melissa's sister learned she also carries the BRCA gene mutation.

"My dad, my sister, me – it's hard to believe, but I think we're all better off for having this knowledge," says Melissa. "The journey has been difficult, but the end result is positive. We've taken control of our health."

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# Study may help increase breast cancer survival

Dr. Kelly Metcalfe is putting research into practice

Findings from a new study at WCRI will help increase the chance of survival for women with some types of breast cancer, says lead author and WCRI scientist Dr. Kelly Metcalfe, PhD.

The study, published in the February issue of the *British Medical Journal*, confirms that women who have breast cancer and a mutation in one of the BRCA genes are half as likely to die from breast cancer in the next 20 years if they opt for removal of both breasts rather than just the cancerous breast.

"When treating the first breast cancer, we were always thinking about preventing a recurrence," says Dr. Metcalfe, "but we didn't have the data to show prevention of a new cancer in the opposite breast had an impact on mortality. We now know that a bilateral mastectomy is effective at preventing a second breast cancer and that this has a very favourable impact on mortality."

Dr. Metcalfe's next goal is to get the results into clinical practice. She is leading a new study that offers fast-track genetic testing to 1,000 women who meet the criteria for testing at the time of their breast cancer diagnosis. New genetic technology available at WCH allows for results within 10 business days, compared with three to six months at most other testing centres. "This way, women will know if they have a BRCA mutation prior to surgery and can then base treatment decisions on this genetic information," Dr. Metcalfe explains.

The research team tracks the impact of that information on each woman's treatment decision and on psychosocial functioning to determine if rapid genetic testing is appropriate at the time of diagnosis.

"Are women going to act differently with this information?" asks Dr. Metcalfe. "I believe so. I think we are going to see a decrease in the number of women dying of BRCA-associated breast cancer."



## KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Women who carry the BRCA genetic mutation face up to a 70% chance of contracting breast cancer.
- Once diagnosed, women have a 34% chance of developing breast cancer in the opposite breast within 15 years.
- For women who develop a new breast cancer in the opposite breast, the risk of dying doubles.
- At 20 years, the survival rate of women in the WCRI study was 88% for women with a double mastectomy and 66% for women with a single mastectomy.
- The risk of breast cancer in women with BRCA can be almost entirely eliminated with surgery.

# A farewell message from our CEO and Board Chair



*Sue Carruthers, President and CEO (L),  
and Joanne Mealia, Board Chair*

In a hospital that is making its mark as a change leader, change is a good thing. After two years spent working together at the helm of Women's College Hospital Foundation, we conclude our terms in June.

We're very pleased to introduce Kathy Hay, formerly Chief Development Officer at the Art Gallery of Ontario and President and CEO of The Credit Valley Hospital Foundation, who will serve as Foundation President and CEO effective June 23. With Kathy, incoming Board Chair Ann Davis and an incomparable Board and staff team, we believe the Foundation will have the expertise, leadership and true grit not just to fulfill its mission to support WCH, but to change the future of healthcare philanthropy.

As you know, we are approaching the end of a very ambitious redevelopment of our hospital. This past Christmas Eve, in the middle of an ice storm, we received our largest gift ever – a \$10 million investment.

It's these moments that we cherish. They – and you, our donors and volunteers – are the perfect evidence that, with dedication and vision, Women's College Hospital Foundation can do anything.

We can't wait to see what the future brings!

## Building the future of healthcare... together

A year after the opening of the first phase of Women's College Hospital, construction of the hospital's second phase remains on time and on budget thanks to the continuing support of generous donors.

"The response to our new hospital has been universally positive," says Dan Hill, WCH Chief Financial Officer. "It's not just about a great facility. It's about a new way of doing healthcare business. Our new building is enabling the future of healthcare."

Scheduled to open in September 2015, the second phase will extend the capacity on each floor for health professionals to engage in WCH's uniquely integrated model of healthcare that includes clinical care, research and teaching. For the first time, physicians will have direct access to patients and research in the same space. With it will come "a greater ability to translate research findings into advances in clinical care," explains Dan.

The new construction will also allow the hospital to merge all of its educational activities in a single space called the Centre for Ambulatory



*Phase 2 construction under way*

Care Education (CACE). While teaching will continue to take place primarily in WCH clinics, healthcare students will also have the opportunity to engage in informal learning and mentorship in the CACE, which will include a comprehensive medical library, simulation rooms and a home base for international learners.

Patients will also benefit from new clinical spaces, including an expanded Acute Ambulatory Care Unit for patients with complex medical conditions. WCH's signature pink-glazed cube will house

a new conference centre with a 150-seat auditorium and eight breakout rooms.

Women's College Hospital Foundation is raising \$21 million over the next two years to complete the redevelopment, support programs and purchase specialized equipment.



# Ontario's skin cancer leader

WCH is home to specialized expertise and ground-breaking procedures

When Dr. An-Wen Chan completed his dermatology residency at Women's College Hospital he made it his goal to one day return. Today, the specially-trained WCH physician and researcher is part of the largest and most diverse academic dermatology program in the Greater Toronto Area. He's one of just three Toronto doctors – all at WCH – specializing in a ground-breaking procedure for the treatment of skin cancer.

"No other healthcare centre in Ontario treats as many cases of skin cancer as Women's College Hospital," says Dr. Chan.

The program's reputation is owed largely to the Mohs Centre, the only clinic of its kind in Toronto for the treatment of high-risk skin cancers on the face and neck. Thanks to a donation from Cadillac Fairview to purchase a cryostat machine, Dr. Chan and his colleagues, Drs. Christian Murray and Nowell Solish, are able to perform twice as many procedures and reduce wait times to just one to two weeks. The cryostat processes tissue so it can be tested to determine if any cancerous cells remain. Mohs surgery typically results in a 99% cure rate and less scarring because it

leaves behind more of the healthy tissue surrounding the tumour.

In addition to the patient benefits, Dr. Chan values the research opportunities afforded by WCH's innovative techniques and large patient base. Among several research projects, he's evaluating Mohs surgery patients to determine the best practices for reducing post-surgical infection rates. "We're looking at innovations such as the type of antiseptic agent we use to cleanse the skin prior to surgery and the types of gloves worn by the surgeons," he explains.

WCH's dermatology team is well equipped to translate research questions from the exam room to the lab and back again thanks to the opening of the new hospital last spring. On the fifth floor of the clinical care pavillion, specialists from the Mohs Centre, the Dermatology Centre, the Wound Care Centre and the Phototherapy Education and Research Centre (PERC) are co-located for the first time.

Says Dr. Chan: "It's made it much easier to collaborate and manage complex patients."

## "Best in Class"

Rick Holinshead is only half joking when he says he's a graduate of the "school of cut and paste." That's how the Toronto resident refers to the surgeries he experienced for 15 years before a referral brought him to Women's College Hospital's Mohs Centre, Toronto's only home for advanced surgery for skin cancer.

Rick has basal-cell carcinoma, the most common form of skin cancer, which is generally treated by cutting out the tumour. Sometimes though, as happened repeatedly in Rick's case, the cancer returns and patients must go through yet another potentially disfiguring procedure. After more than 15 "cut and pastes" between 1994 and 2009, Rick turned to WCH's Dr. Christian Murray for a long-term preventive solution.

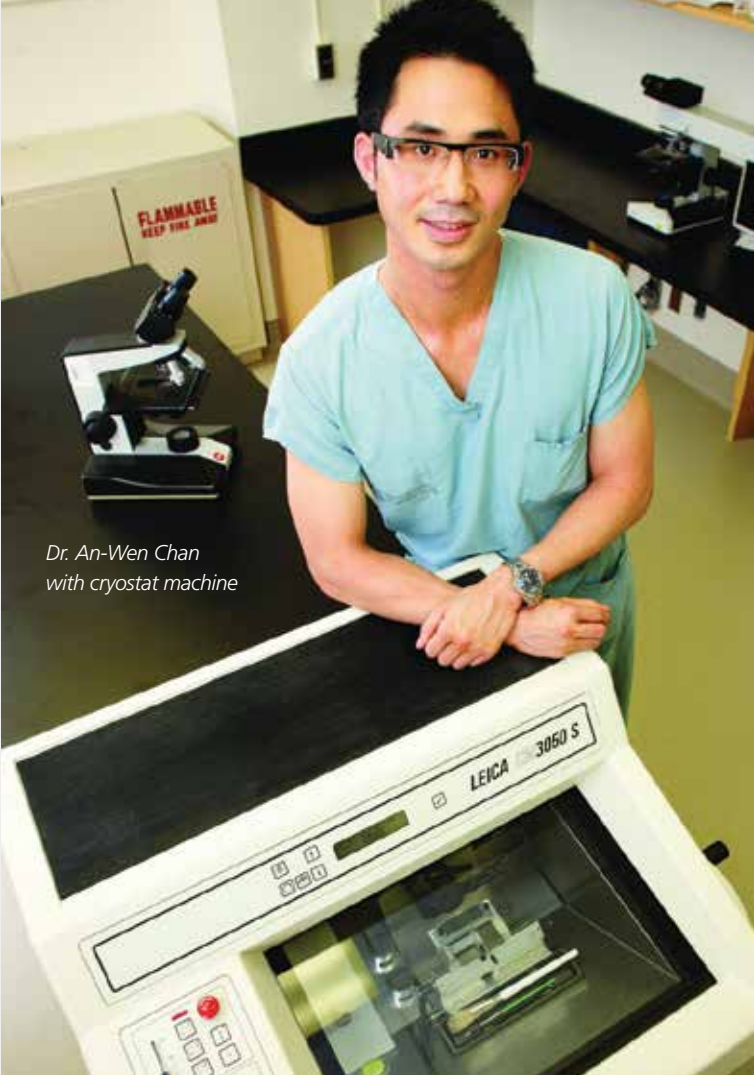
"I had my first surgery at Women's College in December 2010 and a follow-up procedure in January 2011," he explains. "That's it! There's been nothing since."



Rick Holinshead

"Dr. Murray was awesome," says Rick. "Every step of the way, he treated me as a partner in finding a solution to my situation. I can't say enough about the Mohs clinic," he says. "It really is best in class."

In recognition of the care he received, Rick made a generous donation to Women's College Hospital. He's also a senior partner at Mercer, a global human resources firm, which supports the Foundation's annual *Women for Women's* fundraising luncheon.



Dr. An-Wen Chan  
with cryostat machine

“There are still many misconceptions about sun safety and your skin,” says WCH dermatologist and Mohs surgeon Dr. An-Wen Chan. He offers these tips for keeping your skin healthy year-round:

- **There's no such thing as a safe tan.** Always protect exposed skin with sunscreen, even during the winter months and on cloudy days. Dr. Chan recommends a product with SPF 30, broad-spectrum (UVA and UVB) coverage.
- **Apply sunscreen 20 minutes** prior to sun exposure and then reapply every two hours and after swimming or sweating.
- **Cover up** with a hat, long sleeves and long pants.
- **Choose the shade** over direct sun and avoid being in the sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. – typically the most intense hours of the day.
- **Never visit a tanning salon.** Research shows salon tanning doubles your risk of getting melanoma.
- **Become familiar with your own skin.** Monitor it every two months for any changes. If a new lesion develops, an existing lesion changes or you experience bleeding that doesn't heal, see your doctor.

# Expose yourself to the truths of skin cancer.

Join us as Dr. An-Wen Chan discusses skin cancer risk factors and prevention, tips for optimal skin health, and how WCH is leading innovations in treatment through micrographic surgery.

FREE SKIN CANCER **WEBINAR**  
ON JUNE 17, 2014 | 12:00 - 1:00 P.M.

To register contact Fiona Bedlington at [fiona.bedlington@wchospital.ca](mailto:fiona.bedlington@wchospital.ca)

# The best place for after-cancer care

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, WCH's new building is enabling more cancer survivors to receive care in our one-of-a-kind program.

The After Cancer Treatment Transition (ACTT) clinic was launched at WCH in 2010. In partnership with Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, it's the only program of its kind in Canada. In four years, referrals have topped well over 1,000 patients and demand for cancer survivor support continues to grow. The clinic recently expanded to care for more patients in the new Women's College Hospital.

"When treatment ends and a patient is in remission, people expect them to be happy to be alive, but the emotional reality is often quite different," explains ACTT medical director Dr. Carol Townsley. Many cancer survivors experience a mixed bag of emotions – including anxiety about being cast adrift from the healthcare providers who cared for them for so long and fear that the cancer will return.

In the ACTT clinic, survivors receive help in understanding the full scope of their diagnosis and treatment. They are counselled on a healthy post-cancer lifestyle that includes both physical and mental wellness and taught how to watch for returning symptoms.

"Princess Margaret is the best place for patients receiving cancer treatment," says Dr. Townsley. "Women's College Hospital is the best place for patients after they complete their treatment."

## THE BEST HOLIDAY GIFT EVER

"Thank you for investing in an incredible hospital that's not only changing health – care, it's changing lives like mine."

– Caroline Noakes

A letter from Caroline Noakes, the first patient to undergo surgery in the new Women's College Hospital, attracted more than the \$150,000 in donations to Women's College Hospital Foundation.

"WCH's innovative approach to breast health may very well have saved my life," Caroline wrote in the December appeal. She asked former patients and friends to join her in helping Women's College Hospital continue changing the future of women's health.

"Thank you to all our donors," says Foundation President and CEO Sue Carruthers, "for the best holiday gift our patients and doctors have ever received."



"I see the progress and I'm very impressed."

– Dorothy St. John

Dorothy St. John's affiliation with Women's College Hospital began as a favour to a friend. It was 1998 and WCH was making news for its proposed merger with Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. "A friend asked if I was interested in marching at the hospital to show our support and keep it going," recalls the 80-year-old. "I said 'yes' because it meant so much to her."

Sometime during the hours spent walking, Dorothy started to learn more about the hospital she was backing. She liked what she heard. In short order, the Scarborough resident signed on as a patient of Dr. Deborah Levitan in WCH's Family Practice Health Centre.

That same year, she made her first donation to Women's College Hospital Foundation. By 2002, in recognition of the "excellent service" she receives, Dorothy became a monthly donor. She hasn't missed a month since.

"I see the progress and I'm very impressed. I know the money I donate helps a lot of people."

**For more information on making a monthly gift to Women's College Hospital Foundation** contact Fiona Bedlington at 416-323-6400 ext. 2319 or [fiona.bedlington@wchospital.ca](mailto:fiona.bedlington@wchospital.ca)



# Off to the races for Women's College Hospital

Community champion hosts unique fundraising event



Steve Quinn

Steve Quinn is betting that you dream of becoming the next Dale Earnhardt or Mario Andretti. The co-owner of Quinn Automotive Group, which includes BMW Toronto, is hosting an event this June that will put you behind the wheel of a race car to raise funds for Women's College Hospital.

The BMW High Performance Driving Event includes a one-hour safety talk, personal in-car instruction and then a one-of-a-kind opportunity to burn some rubber on the famed 3.957-km track at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park in Bowmanville, Ontario.

"I'm always looking for the next opportunity to fundraise," explains Steve, who first got involved with WCH as a member of the Golf Classic committee. The Quinn Group was one of the sponsors of the event in 2012 and again in 2013. "I wanted an idea that was unique to provide potential donors with something money can't buy. Ninety

per cent of the people who participate have never driven a car on a racetrack before."

He has hosted the driving event for several years in support of various charities. Women's College Hospital Foundation will receive the proceeds from the 2014 event to be held on Father's Day.

Steve's event is just one of a number of WCH third-party fundraisers planned for this year. "Thanks to the hard work and commitment of supporters like Steve, we're able to partner in support of events that, ultimately, help us better serve our patients," says Susan Wellington, senior development officer with the Foundation.

For more information about the BMW High Performance Driving Event or to learn how you can host your own fundraising event, visit [wchf.ca](http://wchf.ca) or email [susan.wellington@wchospital.ca](mailto:susan.wellington@wchospital.ca)

## Got an event idea?

Women's College Hospital Foundation volunteer, sponsor and event host Steve Quinn shares these tips for starting your own event in support of the Foundation:

**Keep it unique** – People will pay for one-of-a-kind experiences like a lap around a racetrack or a behind-the-scenes tour of your manufacturing company. Remember, adds Steve, "what's routine for you might be unique for everyone else."

**Set a reasonable goal** – Don't try to do it all at once. If you want to attract a new demographic to your event and to the hospital, keep the price affordable and plan for an encore performance the following year.

**Get involved** – There's no better way to find out how you can help WCH than by getting involved. "Getting to know the hospital was my inspiration to do something more," says Steve.

To learn how you can host an event for WCH, contact Susan Wellington at [susan.wellington@wchospital.ca](mailto:susan.wellington@wchospital.ca)



# THANKS

for outstanding commitment

Dr. Christian Murray

If David and Sybil Finlay have one word to describe Dr. Christian Murray and his team at Women's College Hospital's Mohs Centre, it's "commitment."

Four years ago, David was referred to the Mohs Centre for treatment of a basal-cell carcinoma on his neck. The most common form of skin cancer, it's generally treated by taking out the tumour and some surrounding skin. At the Mohs Centre, doctors remove single layers of cancerous tissue and examine them under a microscope until no further cancer is found.

"I arrived for my procedure around 7:30 a.m.," David recalls, "and was out by noon. At 11 p.m. that night, Dr. Murray called to make sure my medication was working and that there were no side effects. He started his day before 7 a.m. and was still at it at 11 o'clock at night. That's commitment!"

In recognition of the outstanding care David received, the Finlays made a gift in 2011 in honour of Dr. Murray and the Mohs Centre team. They have continued their support each year since.



"We give to ensure they have what they need to keep up the good work and also to raise awareness," says David. "We all know someone with skin cancer who was treated and then called back a week later. This is more definitive. It works. The more people who can take advantage of it, the better."

To make a THANKS gift to a Women's College Hospital staff member, contact Fiona Bedlington at 416-323-6400 ext. 2319 or [fiona.bedlington@wchospital.ca](mailto:fiona.bedlington@wchospital.ca)

## Thank you for your support!

Women's College Hospital Foundation is a member of Imagine Canada's Ethical Code Program. The Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability Code can be read at [www.imaginecanada.ca](http://www.imaginecanada.ca)



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