

FALL EDITION 2017

Heart & Soul

YOUR GENEROSITY IN ACTION



Cover:

Suzanne's story:
The very best care,
every step of the way.

L-R WCH surgeon Dr. John Semple, grateful patient Suzanne Lima and family physician Dr. Ruth Heisey

WCH
WOMEN'S COLLEGE
HOSPITAL FOUNDATION
Health care for women | REVOLUTIONIZED

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Suzanne's story: The very best care, every step of the way

Suzanne Lima says the hardest part of her journey with breast cancer was telling her parents about her diagnosis.

As a single woman and an only child, she knew they would be devastated. But sharing her news with them had another side effect: for Suzanne, it drove home the severity of her diagnosis.

Although she was terrified, Suzanne says she found incredible comfort in the warmth and expertise of her care team at Women's College Hospital. She also credits them with catching her breast cancer early – and saving her life.

Suzanne's journey to becoming a breast cancer survivor began with a routine physical at WCH's Family Practice Health Centre in 2008. Her family doctor, Dr. Ruth Heisey, was reviewing the results of Suzanne's annual mammogram and suspected that something wasn't quite right. Dr. Heisey recommended a right breast ultrasound. Following a number of screening tests, an MRI and a biopsy, Suzanne's care team found that she had developed stage 1 breast cancer in her right breast. Shocked, Suzanne began preparing herself for a lumpectomy and radiation – but was soon confronted with more bad news. The MRI had detected two spots on her left breast as well, and a second biopsy confirmed cancer.

Leaning on her friends and her WCH care team for advice and support, Suzanne elected to ultimately have both breasts removed, followed by an oophorectomy to eliminate her risk of developing ovarian cancer.

“What struck me throughout my cancer journey was the people that helped me, and the information and resources available to me,” says Suzanne. “From Dr. Heisey to Dr. Tulin Cil, who performed my mastectomies, and Dr. John Semple, who performed my breast reconstruction surgery, at each step I had a wonderful team of healthcare professionals who are truly blessed with the gift of healing.”

Suzanne's journey did not end with her surgeries. Finding herself struggling with negative body image



Grateful WCH patient Suzanne Lima

after her mastectomies, she sought counselling at WCH and participated in an exercise program at Wellspring, a community-based centre providing support for people facing cancer.

As she began healing, Suzanne realized that she wanted to help others through their journey. She now volunteers at WCH in the surgical unit and occasionally at the Henrietta Banting Breast Centre, and sits on a special advisory panel committed to further improving care pathways at WCH for women at risk of or facing a cancer diagnosis.

She also has advice to share with other women who may be at the start of their own journey: “Listen to and trust your doctor, but while you're waiting – for test results or surgeries, sometimes weeks at a time – surround yourself with positive distractions. Go for walks, attend classes or support groups.”

Today, Suzanne is cancer-free and getting back to her life. And she's grateful to WCH, every step of the way.

You can help save the lives of more women like Suzanne by supporting excellence in care for women's cancers at WCH! Donate online at www.wchf.ca or call us at 416-323-6323.

Q&A: *Up close and personal with...* **Dr. Mohammad Akbari**

Dr. Mohammad Akbari is a scientist at Women's College Research Institute and an assistant professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and Institute of Medical Sciences at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on identifying new genes responsible for different hereditary cancers and developing evidence-based cancer treatments that are personalized to patients who carry a genetic mutation.



*Dr. Mohammad Akbari, scientist,
Women's College Research Institute*

We sat down with Dr. Akbari to learn more about his background and a new national research study with the potential to save countless lives.

What first drew you to the field of cancer research?

After I finished medical school at Tehran University, I enrolled in a post-doctoral program in the field of gastrointestinal disorders. During my studies, I became interested in the heritability of esophageal cancer – cancer of the esophagus – in the Turkmen population, which seemed to have an unusually high incidence of the disease. I established a study to explore the connection further. Another scientist with a similar interest became fascinated with my work and introduced me to Dr. Steven Narod, who is the director of the hereditary cancers research team here at Women's College Hospital.

Is that what led you to move to Toronto?

Ultimately, yes. Steven took an interest in my study and we decided to expand it. That's when I decided I wanted to pursue a PhD in molecular genetics. I enrolled in a master's program at the University of Toronto and then transferred into the PhD program. I graduated in 2010 and started my work as a scientist with Women's College Research Institute in 2012. From there, I developed a fascination with the genetics of inherited women's cancers.

The Screen Project is one of your newest and biggest studies. Can you tell us about it?

Absolutely. The Screen Project is the very first study in the world to offer genetic testing for the BRCA1/2 genetic mutations to the general public.

Our ultimate goal with this study is to save lives by identifying as many BRCA1/2 carriers as possible before cancer can begin. The other major impact of this study is that it will help to create a large body of data from Canadians of diverse backgrounds that will inform future research studies and treatment recommendations.

Amazing work. Can you tell us a bit about your life outside of the lab?

The rest of my time is mostly spent being a dad! My wife and I have three girls aged seven, four and one month. Life is full!

SPOTLIGHT



Your support is advancing historic progress for healthcare research!

This past spring, Dr. Akbari and his team at Women's College Research Institute launched an unprecedented national study offering Canadians genetic testing for the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genetic mutations, which significantly increase the risk of breast, ovarian and prostate cancer. Called The Screen Project, this historic initiative will empower Canadians to know their risk and their treatment options and will inform ongoing breakthroughs in BRCA1/2 research and care.

Previously, screening for the BRCA1/2 genetic mutations was only available to individuals meeting strict criteria. Through The Screen Project, any Canadian over 18 can order a testing kit online at www.thescreenproject.ca. If the test is positive, you will receive a call from one of our genetic counsellors here at WCH to walk you through the results, the implications and the various preventive treatment options available.

For more information about The Screen Project and to find out how you can sign up for a testing kit, visit www.thescreenproject.ca.

A history of firsts in research and care for women's cancers



- 1945:** WCH launches a long-term breast cancer study, one of the earliest of its kind in Canada.
- 1947:** WCH leaders collaborate on the development of a simplified Pap test, now standard practice around the world in screening for cervical cancer.
- 1948:** Ontario's first cancer detection clinic for women opens at WCH.
- 1963:** WCH becomes the first hospital in Ontario to use mammography as a diagnostic tool to detect breast cancer.
- 1967:** WCH's Dr. Henrietta Banting and Dr. Elizabeth Forbes publish an influential study proving that mammography holds benefits as a diagnostic tool.
- 1977:** The Henrietta Banting Breast Centre opens at WCH, an integrated treatment, education and research centre.

- 1994-** Dr. Steven Narod, now director of WCH's
- 1995:** hereditary cancers research team, co-discovers the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genetic mutations.
- 2010:** The After Cancer Treatment Transitional Care Centre (ACTT) opens at WCH, a collaborative partnership with Princess Margaret Hospital that provides ongoing care and survivorship support to women recovering from cancer treatment.
- 2017:** WCH launches The Peter Gilgan Centre for Women's Cancers, a new collaboration with the Canadian Cancer Society. The Centre's vision and goal is to transform care for women's cancers across Canada.

Pedaling to transform care for women's cancers

On Sunday, August 13, Tour de Bleu – a private cycling fundraiser hosted by the Peter Gilgan Foundation and Mattamy Homes – took to the streets with a mission to help give every woman every chance to survive cancer. The event's 50 cyclists pedaled 160 kilometres from Muskoka to Toronto in support of The Peter Gilgan Centre for Women's Cancers at WCH, a new collaboration with the Canadian Cancer Society.

Together, the Tour's riders, donors and sponsors collectively raised a record-breaking \$3.66 million to transform care for women's cancers across Canada – ultimately saving generations of lives.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the entire Tour de Bleu community!

You can join Tour de Bleu in transforming care for women's cancers by donating today!
Visit www.wchf.ca and click on Donate to make a special gift that will help save lives.



L-R Philanthropist Peter Gilgan, founder of Tour de Bleu, with WCH patient Sharon Newman, WCH Foundation president & CEO Kathy Hay and Dr. Ruth Heisey, medical director of The Peter Gilgan Centre for Women's Cancers.

Robyn's gift of thanks

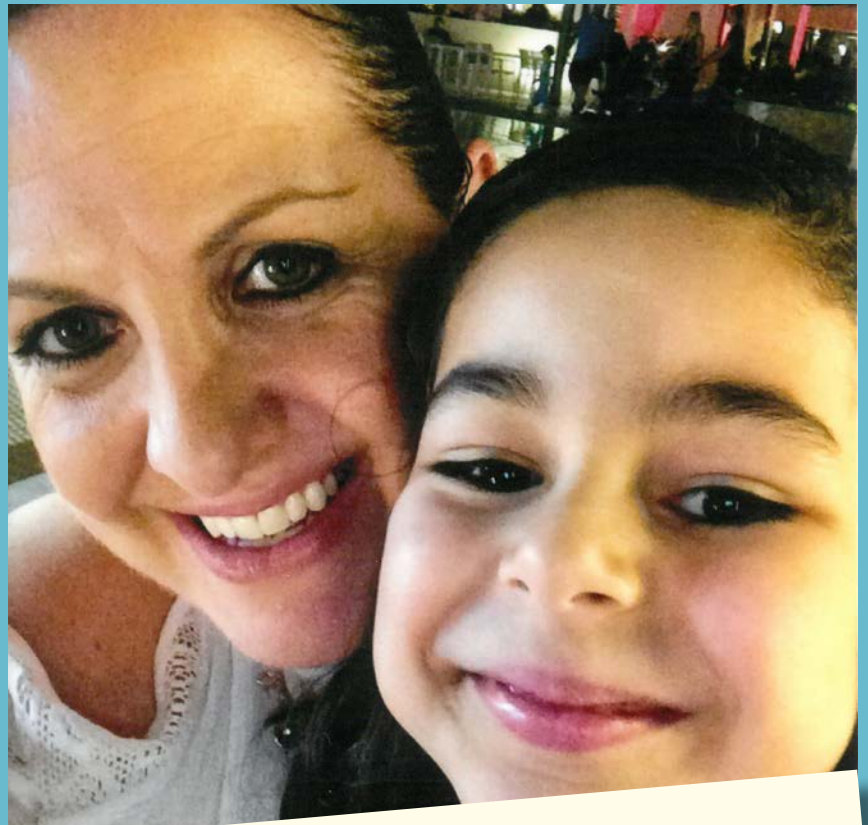
After watching her mother pass away from breast cancer, Robyn Mercado knew she'd do whatever it took to reduce her own risk so she could be there for her young daughter.

Both her mom and sister had been diagnosed with melanoma and breast cancer, and Robyn herself had been diagnosed with melanoma; she knew she could be the next one to receive a breast cancer diagnosis.

Working with her care team at Women's College Hospital, Robyn made the decision to undergo a double mastectomy – virtually eliminating her risk of developing the disease. Grateful to her care team for their incredible support throughout her journey, Robyn decided to make a special gift in their honour. She also shared a moving letter expressing her gratitude for the care she received at Women's College Hospital during one of the most overwhelming times of her life.

Has a Women's College Hospital care provider made a difference in your life? Join Robyn by saying thanks with a special donation in their honour.

Visit www.givewiththanks.ca or call us at 416-323-6323.



How does one begin to thank and express gratitude to the most exceptional human beings on earth? From my scary first visit to the 5th floor of WCH in July 2015 up until now, there has never been a moment where I haven't received anything but the best care imaginable.

I have been treated with empathy, compassion, kindness and professionalism by each and every one of my care team members, and I would not have reached this point without them all.

I am reminded how lucky I am to have made this decision with such great guidance and input, before it could have become a life or death situation. The exemplary care you provide, your long, gruelling hours, your dedication to saving lives and giving people their lives back... You are committed to the greatest cause.

With my utmost respect and gratitude, Robyn Mercado

Donate today! Giving is easy:

- Call the Foundation at 416-323-6323.
- Visit www.wchf.ca and click on Ways to Give or Donate.
- Visit us on the 4th floor of Women's College Hospital (76 Grenville St., Toronto).

We love hearing from you!

If you have any feedback about this issue of Heart & Soul, questions about donating or simply want to connect with a member of your Foundation staff team, please contact Marian Johnson at marian.johnson@wchospital.ca or 416-813-4741.

Let's stay in touch!

- Follow us on Twitter [@wchf](https://twitter.com/wchf) and Facebook at facebook.com/wchfdn.
- Sign up for regular e-news updates by emailing foundation@wchospital.ca.

Your generosity in action!

News and updates from Women's College Hospital

You are a valued member of a donor community with extraordinary impact! Here, we are pleased to share exciting news and updates from WCH that you have helped make possible.

WCH launches new study to understand the genetics of postpartum depression

Women's College Hospital is leading the Canadian launch of an innovative new mobile app-based study aimed at understanding the genetics behind postpartum depression. Open to any Canadian woman over 18 who has given birth, the study will analyze the genes of women affected by postpartum depression with a goal to develop more effective treatment options. For more information and to find out how you can sign up to participate, visit www.pactfortheure.com.



First barrier-free rapid access addiction clinic in downtown Toronto opens at WCH

Canada is in the midst of an unprecedented opiate crisis. In response to this growing challenge, WCH recently launched a new Rapid Access Addiction Medicine clinic – the first of its kind in downtown Toronto. The clinic allows patients experiencing addiction to be seen within one to three days, without a booked appointment and without a physician referral. By creating faster access to addiction care, WCH is helping to reduce overdoses and deaths and building a stronger, healthier community.



Kate Hardy, addiction clinic project manager and Dr. Meldon Kahan, director of substance use services at WCH

Announcing a new chair in ambulatory anesthesia

Dr. Richard Brull, staff anesthesiologist at WCH and professor of anesthesia at the University of Toronto, has been named the inaugural Evelyn Bateman Cara Operations Chair in Ambulatory Anesthesia and Women's Health at Women's College Hospital. In this role, Dr. Brull will focus on developing safer anesthesia techniques for women undergoing ambulatory breast cancer-related surgeries.



Dr. Richard Brull

myHealthRecord reaches 10,000 patient users

myHealthRecord, WCH's new online patient portal, has achieved a major milestone: 10,000 patients have signed up, and that number is growing each day. The portal was launched in late 2016 and has been met with positive feedback from both WCH patients and providers. myHealthRecord allows patients to conveniently and securely access their test results and medical history, manage appointments and communicate with their care teams – all online.



Visit www.wchchart.ca/Mychart to register today.

Thank you for your support!

WCHF is fully accredited under Imagine Canada's Standards Program. The Standards Program awards accreditation to charities and nonprofits that demonstrate excellence in five areas of operations: board governance, financial accountability, fundraising, staff management, and volunteer involvement.



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