

## Four Strokes in Six Months

It was like walking on ice. In February 2020, Don Cressy from Dunnville was at his office in Hamilton when he began to feel strange. Every time he took a step, his foot slid as though it couldn't find traction.

"Then my vision went blurry," recalls Don. "I was assessed by the medical team at work, who called an ambulance because they thought I was having a stroke."

Scans at Hamilton General Hospital confirmed that Don was indeed having a stroke.

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(Continued from page 1) Blood-thinning medication was administered, which successfully cleared a blockage in his artery. Don stayed at The General for a week, recovering from both his stroke and a bad case of the flu.

After returning home, Don was anxious to move forward and resume his normal life.

"I'd been home for seven days when I suddenly lost strength in my right hand," says Don. "When I stood up, my leg went weak too. My wife called 9-1-1, and my entire right side was weak by the time the paramedics got there."

When Don arrived at The General, scans confirmed that he was having a second stroke. Clot-busting medication was administered intravenously, and he slowly regained some function on his right side over the next several hours.



Don Cressy

"The amazing physiotherapists helped me learn to walk again over the next week," explains Don. "Then I was discharged and I thought it was all behind me."

Three months later, history repeated itself with a third stroke. He lost strength in his hand again during lunch one day. Upon returning to The General, an Ultrasound revealed another blockage in an artery.

Endovascular surgery was conducted to remove the blockage and implant two stents to help keep the artery open.

"After a couple of days, I could do laps around the hallways of The General without a walker and I returned home shortly after," says Don.

The fourth stroke came another three months later.

"I had just climbed down a ladder at home when my arm went weak. I was taken to The General again, where I was treated with blood-thinning medications. I'm lucky I didn't have the stroke when I was up on the ladder because I could have had a nasty fall."

Don has been in good health since his last stroke in August 2020 and his stroke team continues to monitor him. He still has mild numbness in his right side, but he is grateful that the strokes didn't result in more lasting damage.

"The doctors, nurses and staff went above and beyond throughout this whole experience," says Don. "Thanks to the outstanding care I received, I was able to retire and I'm enjoying time with my grandsons and granddaughter. I've been in good hands at Hamilton General Hospital."



## Did You Know?

- Hamilton General Hospital is home to one of only two adult regional burn centres in Ontario.
- Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre is one of only three sites in Ontario providing all forms of stem cell transplants.
- McMaster Children's Hospital is home to Canada's largest neonatal intensive care unit including supportive maternal care.
- St. Peter's Hospital is a regional centre of excellence that provides specialized care for seniors and those living with chronic illness.



## Providing Breast-Reconstruction Options for Cancer Patients

Receiving care for breast cancer can mean the difference between life and death. And sometimes treatment requires the removal of a breast, which can be devastating for a patient.

However, breast reconstruction surgery may be a viable option following a mastectomy (the removal of one or both breasts) or a lumpectomy (the removal of part of a breast).

Yolanda MacArthur from Niagara Falls is just one of nearly 100 patients who undergo breast reconstruction every year at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre. She underwent DIEP flap surgery – a procedure in which the deep inferior epigastric perforator (DIEP) blood vessels, plus the skin and fat connected to the vessels, are extracted from the abdomen and reconstructed to form a breast.

“I would have been fine with an implanted prosthetic,” says Yolanda, “but having something that looks like a real breast has really boosted my confidence.”

Another type of surgery is called lipotransfer, which involves moving fat from one area of the body to another. Benefits include reduced severity of post-mastectomy pain syndromes, less scarring and minimized lymphedema.

Equipment needed to perform lipotransfer procedures is currently unavailable at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre. To ensure that surgeons are able to offer the best procedure for each patient's situation, donor support is needed to help purchase lipotransfer equipment.



Yolanda MacArthur

## Pediatric Cancer Care for the Ages

Childhood cancer is a lifelong journey that requires highly specialized spaces for care. Ensuring that patients have the best possible environment for cancer treatment and healing is a top priority at McMaster Children's Hospital.

Thanks to generous donor support, construction is underway on the expansion of the Pediatric Oncology Clinic, where more than 900 children and youth receive care each year.

The expansion was inspired by feedback from patients, families and staff. Separate treatment areas are being created to meet the needs of different age groups, and a new quiet space will allow physicians and staff to consult with families and patients.

We look forward to sharing more updates as construction progresses on this exciting expansion.



## Learning to Walk Again

Retirement did not go as planned for Jodi Anastasakis of Waterdown. In February 2020, she had been retired for only a month when she slipped on her icy driveway. “I twisted my foot in the wrong direction when I fell,” recalls Jodi.

In the Emergency Department at Hamilton General Hospital, it was discovered that she had broken and dislocated her ankle. She underwent surgery, which became complicated when blood clots formed in her ankle and travelled to her lungs.

“An endovascular procedure was needed to remove the clots,” says Jodi. “About 10 days later, they discovered an aggressive infection eating the muscle tissue in my ankle. Despite numerous antibiotics, the infection worsened and spread into my bones.”

Another surgery involved the removal of infected bone and soft tissue. Skin and muscle grafts from her back and leg were used to reconstruct her ankle.

Jodi was transferred to the Medically Complex Program at St. Peter’s Hospital in June 2020.

“It was difficult being in a wheelchair all the time,” says Jodi. “The amazing physiotherapists helped me strengthen my legs and improve mobility.”

By August, Jodi could walk with assistance and she was discharged home.

“Unfortunately, the infection never went away,” explains Jodi. “I ended up having eight surgeries in total on my ankle.”



Further stress was added by the possibility that amputation might be needed. Luckily, that never became a reality, and an antibiotic was finally identified that eliminated the infection.

“Because of the infection, and the removal of infected bone and tissue, that leg became much shorter than the other.”

An adjustable metal framework, called an external fixator, was screwed into her bones to help the shorter leg grow longer. Jodi was happy to have the fixator removed in June 2021, which enabled her to begin a regimen of intensive physiotherapy.

“I’m determined to regain my independence with the help of my therapists here at St. Peter’s Hospital, which is a very special place indeed.”

## Giving the Greatest Gift of All



Although COVID-19 has changed so many aspects of our lives, it has also reinforced one important fact of life – that the *Gift of Health* is the greatest gift of all.

The holidays are just around the corner again, and the season of giving is the perfect time to make a real difference in health care for your family, friends and community.

By supporting Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation’s *Gift of Health* campaign, you are helping to ensure health care excellence for you and your loved ones – into the new year and beyond.

Donations support vital equipment purchases, important medical research, the development of patient-care spaces and the ongoing education of staff.

Supporting our holiday campaign means giving the *Gift of Health* to families throughout the region. Donor support is more important than ever in helping Hamilton Health Sciences provide the best possible care when needed most.

This holiday season, give the greatest gift of all at [giftofhealth.ca](http://giftofhealth.ca).



## A Canadian First in Radiation Therapy

As the old saying goes, “The right tool is needed for the right job.” Having the right medical equipment helps the teams at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre stay on the leading edge of cancer care in the region.

In June 2021, two new Halcyon Radiation Therapy Systems went online at the Cancer Centre – the first Halcyons in Canada.

“The machines allow us to deliver radiation and quickly take CT scans of the patient,” explains Dr. Robert Hunter, Director of Medical Physics. “Designed for increased accuracy and efficiency, this new technology has several advantages for the patient.”

For example, the circular opening in which the patient lays, called the bore, is much larger and quieter than other CT scanners. This decreases anxiety for patients with claustrophobia or an aversion to loud sounds.

As well, the treatment bed can be lowered further than other systems, increasing accessibility for patients with mobility issues.

“Imaging and treatment are done more quickly with the Halcyon, which means the patient doesn’t stay as long,” says Dr. Hunter. “It’s a better experience and it also improves treatment accuracy. This system is helping us deliver the best possible care when needed most.”



The Halcyon team at Juravinski Cancer Centre

## The Next Generation of CyberKnife

Each year, hundreds of patients undergo radiation therapy with the CyberKnife at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre – one of only three sites in Canada to have this specialized technology.

The CyberKnife has been treating patients for nearly 12 years and

the unit is nearing the end of its expected life cycle.

“Using the CyberKnife allows us to target tumours with sub-millimetre accuracy,” explains Radiation Oncologist Dr. Jeffrey Greenspoon.

“The system’s robot-mounted linear-accelerator can maneuver

in multiple directions to deliver radiation and attack the tumour from different directions. This allows high doses of radiation to be delivered to the target and low-radiation doses to the surrounding normal tissues.”

Funding support from the Foundation has enabled the acquisition of a new CyberKnife, which will go online in 2022.

“The new CyberKnife is truly the next generation of technology,” says Dr. Greenspoon. “The updated software and hardware will result in shorter treatment times, increased accuracy and a greater range of motion for targeting tumours from different angles. The unit will significantly enhance the care of patients who visit the site from across the region.”



Dr. Jeffrey Greenspoon

## A Seamless Transition

A new clinic at McMaster University Medical Centre is helping adolescents with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) transition to adult care.

IBD is a medical term for two types of conditions: Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Both conditions are characterized by the chronic inflammation of the digestive tract.

"Canada has one of the highest rates of IBD," explains Dr. Katherine Prowse, a Pediatric Gastroenterologist at McMaster Children's Hospital. "Approximately one in 200 Ontarians has been diagnosed with IBD and the number of people living with the disease increased by 64 per cent between 1999 and 2008."

The transition clinic officially opened in July 2020 and it helps patients up to the age of 22 navigate the adult health care system. Dr. Prowse works in collaboration with Dr. Smita Halder, an Adult Gastroenterologist at McMaster University Medical Centre.

"There's an unrealistic expectation that patients can automatically take charge of their own care once they turn 18," says Dr. Prowse. "Our clinic combines pediatric care with an adult care model, and responsibility is gradually shifted to the patient in manageable portions."

The transition occurs when it is developmentally appropriate and not solely based on a patient's age. The clinic uses data from tools like TRANSITION-Q, a validated transition-readiness scale that helps predict who will transition successfully.

In addition to providing care for more than 100 new IBD patients a year, the clinic teaches important skills like advocacy and self-efficacy. This includes educating patients about their conditions and medications, as well as helping them schedule appointments.

Since adolescence is a vulnerable time in a child's development, the clinic has teamed up with Dr. Christina Grant, a transition expert from the Adolescent Medicine Clinic.

"Building resilience, developing coping skills and identifying any underlying mental-health issues – these are as important as addressing patients' physical needs," explains Dr. Prowse.

McMaster University Medical Centre is the only site in Canada that houses both pediatric and adult services for IBD under one roof. As well, this is the first IBD transition clinic of its kind to be established in Canada. The addition of the clinic has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for patients and families from across the region.

"Having the extra time to transition has been so meaningful to our patients and it has helped reduce anxiety," says Dr. Prowse. "We appreciate the donor gifts that helped us acquire the tools and resources needed to make this clinic a reality."



Dr. Katherine Prowse



**This Thanksgiving season, donate to**

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and Cancer Centre  
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## Walmart Canada Named CMN Corporate Partner of the Year



Over the past 27 years, Walmart Canada has raised and donated more than \$175 million in support of Children's Miracle Network (CMN). These funds supported the enhancement of patient care at children's hospitals across Canada, including McMaster Children's Hospital.

For its remarkable support of pediatric health care, CMN named Walmart Canada its 2020 Canadian Corporate Partner of the Year. The pandemic made fundraising more difficult than ever in 2020, but Walmart Canada succeeded in raising more than \$755,000 in support of McMaster Children's Hospital Foundation.

"Especially during the pandemic, we are extremely grateful to Walmart Canada's associates and customers for their support of health care excellence at McMaster Children's Hospital, including Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre," says Pearl Veenema, Chief Executive Officer of Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation.



Visitors from Walmart Canada tour Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre in July



## Coordinated Care Under One Roof

Hannah never understood why she had poor hearing in her right ear. In 2018, the 14-year-old from York had an MRI to determine if surgery could improve her hearing.

"The MRI showed no physical problems with my ear, but it did show an unusually enlarged pituitary gland," recalls Hannah. "That's when I was referred to McMaster Children's Hospital."

The Endocrinology team at the Hospital determined that her enlarged pituitary gland was not responsible for her hearing loss. However, testing led to a diagnosis of Hashimoto's disease, an autoimmune disease that can affect the pituitary and thyroid glands. Luckily, she was only in the early stages of the disease.

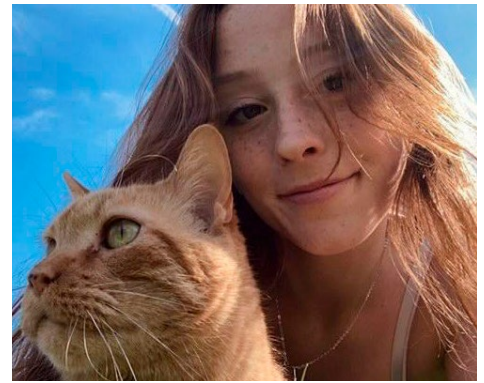
Because these glands produce hormones that regulate important body functions like growth, blood pressure and reproduction, it was

important to keep the disease in check. Fortunately, the Endocrinology team determined they could manage her condition successfully with medication.

Over the next two years, regular scans and blood work were done to monitor her pituitary gland in an effort to control her Hashimoto's disease.

"I'm claustrophobic and I'm afraid of needles," explains Hannah. "The Child Life team played a major role in helping me through my anxieties when it came time for an MRI or blood work."

Hannah was also monitored by the Ophthalmology team for the next two years, as her enlarged pituitary gland can put pressure on the optic nerves. The Pediatric Oncology team was also brought into her circle of care, as an enlarged pituitary gland can be a sign of cancer. Luckily, her eyesight was



not affected and no signs of cancer were found.

Now 17, Hannah still visits the Endocrinology Clinic regularly for testing and monitoring. As she grows into adulthood, her medication will be adjusted accordingly as her hormone levels fluctuate.

"It's great having all these services under the same roof so I can see different specialists during one visit," says Hannah. "The teams are so coordinated and they've done such an amazing job taking care of me."

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