

Countdown to GivingTuesday

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The Gold Cohort – a once-in-a-generation breakthrough

Research teams now accessing Canada’s largest cancer case resource

Over the last few years, researchers across the country have been building something that will help change cancer research and care in Canada. The Gold Cohort is Canada’s largest and most complete cancer case resource and includes data from thousands of diverse cancer patients treated in centres across the country.

Assembled by the Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network (MOHCCN), this incredible dataset is now being accessed for the first time by research teams as part of a pilot program designed to test and assess how this data can advance critical cancer research.

“This is a historic moment for the Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network and for cancer research and care in Canada,” says Dr. André Veillette, executive director of the MOHCCN. “By providing cancer researchers with the Gold Cohort data, we’ll enable them to start asking new questions at a scale that was never before possible in Canada, helping to make discoveries that will directly benefit cancer patients for generations to come.”

Led by the Terry Fox Research Institute and the Terry Fox Foundation, with support from the federal government and donors, the MOHCCN was launched in 2021 to accelerate cancer research and bring personalized treatments to every cancer patient in Canada to help finish the marathon against cancer that Terry started in 1980.

“Over the last four years, MOHCCN has united patients, researchers and clinicians across the country to work together to build a game-changing dataset,” says Dr. Marco Marra, a Distinguished Scientist at BC Cancer, who will lead one of the pilot projects. “We are thrilled to be able to start accessing these data to deliver faster answers and a renewed sense of hope to cancer patients.”

Dr. Marra’s team will be one of the first groups to examine data in the Gold Cohort. Along with collaborators in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Alberta and B.C., the team will use the data to try to identify potential treatment options for glioblastoma, a deadly form of



Dan Murphy with his daughters Grace and Maeve. Mr. Murphy’s clinical and genomic data is part of the Gold Cohort, and he is a member of Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network’s Patient Working Group. SUPPLIED

brain cancer. They are analyzing data from 120 glioblastoma patients treated across the country with a goal of matching patients with more drug options even if those drugs weren’t originally designed for this type of cancer.

In Calgary, a research team is using Gold Cohort data to develop software that will measure immune cell composition inside tumours. A snapshot of how the immune system interacts with the tumour could help identify patients who might benefit from immunotherapies.

And in Montreal, several teams are collaborating to analyze the Gold Cohort data alongside data from two large international organizations. They hope to identify rare driver

mutations, particularly in cancers with complex genomes. Access to large-scale data like these could help find new drivers and pave the way for more personalized cancer care.

Two other teams will access the data to find better ways to identify signatures of leukemia before cancer is formed and new treatment options for patients whose cancer has a specific type of genetic aberration known as extrachromosomal DNA.

Among the nearly 13,000 patients who have already contributed their clinical and genomic data to the Gold Cohort is Dan Murphy, who says being part of the cohort and MOHCCN’s Patient Working Group gives him a sense of hope and excitement, knowing his data are

contributing to advances in precision cancer care that can benefit others.

“I feel like I’m a small part of something that can make a big difference. Adding my data together with that of the other patients, and the impact we can have, is really fulfilling for me. It gives me lots of optimism on where we’re headed with cancer research and cancer care,” says Mr. Murphy, who was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer in 2023.

Mr. Murphy’s tumour was sequenced, and testing revealed a specific mutation that allowed him to receive targeted therapy. Today, his cancer is stable and he’s enjoying a remarkable quality of life.

“Had that not happened, I would’ve gone down a different path. I’m so fortunate that I live in this country where that testing is accessible. Working with the Terry Fox Foundation and being part of an initiative that aims to give all Canadians access to precision medicine and the benefits that can come from it is really special,” he says.

While current survival rates for people with pancreatic cancer are low, Mr. Murphy says the Gold Cohort will give oncologists access to a much more robust source of information to unlock discoveries that can benefit patients.

“It really gives me hope that other people will be able to benefit from the same quality of life that I’m getting, and I hope that a generation from now, or maybe a few years from now, the advances will continue and continue, so that [in the future] people won’t have to go through what I’ve gone through and won’t have to suffer my prognosis,” he says.

Learn more: terryfox.org; tfri.ca; marathonofhopecancercentres.ca

ABOUT GivingTuesday

Tomorrow is GivingTuesday, an important date on the generosity calendar.

Following two of the busiest shopping days of the year – Black Friday and Cyber Monday – GivingTuesday has become an essential day for Canada’s charitable sector, and for charities around the world.

Established in Canada in 2013, GivingTuesday builds awareness of the social sector and raises millions of dollars for thousands of charities across the country.

Learn more: givingtuesday.ca

INSIDE

Surgical excellence CGT2

Pivotal moments CGT3

Melodies and memories CGT3

CLEFT CARE THAT UPLIFTS COMMUNITIES

A cost-effective, high-impact medical intervention that changes lives forever

Worldwide, a baby is born with a cleft every three minutes. By empowering local medical professionals and raising awareness, Smile Train, a global charity, is working to ensure that every child born with a cleft lip and/or palate has access to the care they need to live a full and healthy life.

“Every child deserves the chance to smile and speak without difficulty, and through safe, free cleft surgery and comprehensive care, we make that possible,” says Cicely Dickson, Smile Train Canada Foundation’s director of development.

Smile Train Canada Foundation is one of the non-governmental organization’s (NGO) international entities working to help sponsor cleft surgeries and other vital non-surgical cleft care, like speech, nutrition and orthodontic support in areas of greatest need.

One of those areas of need is India, where it’s estimated more than 33,000 babies are born with a cleft every year and there is a backlog of an estimated one million untreated cases in the country.

In collaboration with Smile Train India, the Canadian foundation is tackling the ongoing need for cleft treatment by building capacity through its sustainable model of training local medical professionals and strengthening hospital infrastructure. Since its founding in 2000, Smile Train India has supported more than 750,000 cleft surgeries.

“In India, many people, particularly those in rural areas, are unaware that a cleft is a treatable condition,” says Ms. Dickson.

“Children born with clefts face lifelong challenges with eating, breathing, hearing and speaking. Without surgery and follow-up care such as speech therapy and orthodontics, their situation can be dire – but with timely treatment, they’re set up to thrive,” says Ms. Dickson.



Paulwin holds a photograph of herself when she was a baby, before her cleft surgery. SUPPLIED

“We do a lot of work with local social workers to educate parents [of children with clefts] that this facial difference can be treated and is free of charge to them,” says Ms. Dickson.

To build the capacity of local medical professionals, the NGO offers various education and training programs and resources for surgeons, anesthesia providers, nurses, nutritionists, orthodontists and other cleft care providers, says Smile Train’s chief development officer, Elyse Taub. The organization has also invested in innovative and leading-edge medical technology – such as virtual simulators – to maximize the impact of training and education.

In addition to its work in India, Smile Train is active in over 75 countries worldwide and has supported over two million life-changing cleft surgeries – more than every other cleft charity combined.

“This is such a cost-effective but high-impact medical intervention. Once a cleft is treated, that child’s life is forever transformed, and there’s a ripple effect on their family and their community. Everyone is uplifted,” says Ms. Dickson.

Learn more: smiletraincanada.org

Create a *moment* that changes everything

This holiday season, you can help youth from child welfare create the moment they knew their future could change—by building lifelong connections and through education, mental health, and employment supports.



“The moment I knew I could break the cycle was when I joined Mothers in Mind, a program funded by the Foundation. It gave me the tools to parent through trauma, not pass it on to my children.”

- Brittany, former youth in care

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Philanthropy is redefining surgical excellence in Victoria, B.C.

The next era of innovation is being launched by a transformational \$7.5-million gift

In a landscape often dominated by academic medical giants, two community hospitals on Vancouver Island – Royal Jubilee Hospital (RJH) and Victoria General Hospital (VGH) – are charting a course toward national leadership in surgical innovation, powered almost entirely by the generosity of the local community.

Through a focused and ambitious fundraising effort by the Victoria Hospitals Foundation (VHF), the two hospitals are now home to technology typically reserved for Canada’s largest, most sophisticated health centres, fostering a fierce sense of Island pride and redefining what non-academic facilities can achieve.

The shift began two years ago when donors funded a first-in-Canada MRI refurbishment project with the country’s most advanced AI technology, and, more recently, brought the Island’s first surgical robot – only the second of its kind in British Columbia – to RJH.

“We’re living examples of how philanthropy can really change the landscape,” says Dr. Jeff McCracken, chief urologist and the newly appointed head of robotics for RJH and VGH.

Dr. McCracken, who has championed the technology for 17 years, notes that the robotics program was made possible purely through community support.

“The community is a hundred per cent responsible for this. There clearly is a desire in the community to elevate the level of care being delivered,” he adds.

That desire was realized quickly. Phase I of the VHF’s campaign, ‘It’s Time for Surgical Innovation,’ raised \$17-million from over 3,400 donors in less than a year. This funding secured the first surgical robot and 50 pieces of essential, best-in-class surgical tools.

Since the first robotic-assisted surgery on February 3, 2025, more than 280 procedures have been performed across urology; ear, nose and throat and general surgery. The impact has been immediate and profound: patients are experiencing dramatically quicker recoveries, less reliance on painkillers and a sharp reduction in readmissions.

For the hospital system, the benefits are systemic.

“We have the system now where patients go home within 24 hours of surgery,” says Dr. McCracken. “We’re down about 85 per cent in the number of surgeries that have to be cancelled monthly because we have this very workable system.”

This level of efficiency saves hundreds of bed days and is already helping reduce patient wait times by tackling the Achilles heel of cancellations, he adds.

Building on this momentum, the VHF has launched Phase II: ‘It’s



Dr. Jeff McCracken, chief urologist and head of robotics, Royal Jubilee and Victoria General hospitals, Victoria, B.C., in front of the donor-funded robotic system. SUPPLIED

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Dr. Jeff McCracken
Chief Urologist and Head of Robotics for RJH and VGH

Time for Surgical Evolution.’ This \$21-million campaign is designed to propel RJH and VGH toward national leadership in minimally invasive care. The campaign includes funding for a second da Vinci robotic system to expand care into specialties like gynecology, oncology, thoracic and pediatric surgery, and a Mazor neurosurgical robot – the pinnacle of brain and spine surgery – which will make Victoria one of the few centres in Canada with the technology.

This next phase is anchored by the largest gift in the foundation’s 36-year history: a transformational \$7.5-million match donation from a local philanthropist. Every gift to the new campaign will be matched, doubling its impact.

“Last October, we embarked on a profound journey with Phase I, and yet it is no surprise to witness this community rise to the occasion, uniting to redefine surgical care on Vancouver Island,” says Avery Brohman, CEO of the Victoria Hospitals Foundation. “Here in Victoria, we can now proudly say that we are setting

the standard for surgical innovation in community hospitals that others look to and aspire toward – we are leaders in this space.”

For Dr. McCracken, the new technology is about more than just better patient outcomes; it’s future-proofing Island health care.

“We now have the ability in Victoria as a community hospital to recruit people who are of the highest tier of training,” he says.

By bringing academic-level technology to a community setting, the Island is attracting top talent who might otherwise gravitate toward larger cities.

Mrs. Brohman emphasizes the power of this collective action.

“The strongest hospitals in Canada have the strongest philanthropy surrounding them,” she says. “How fortunate we are to have a giving community whose generosity drives innovation, motivates our caregivers, uplifts our hospital system, and transforms patient care beyond what was once possible. On Vancouver Island, our community hospitals proved what is possible when philanthropy leads the way.”

Learn more: victoriahf.ca



Dog guides of the future. SUPPLIED



Every Child Deserves the Chance to Smile.

In India and around the world, children with clefts endure challenges that can last a lifetime—including social isolation and severe prejudice in their communities—unless someone like you steps in.

Your Giving Tuesday donation to **Smile Train Canada Foundation** supports life-changing cleft surgery and care, empowering local medical professionals to transform lives every day. A simple act of kindness can ripple across families and communities for generations.

Make your life-changing gift today.
smiletraincanada.org



Scan here to donate



UNLOCKING THE DOG GUIDE JOURNEY – HOW CANADIANS CAN HELP CHANGE LIVES THIS GIVINGTUESDAY

For more than 40 years, Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides (LFCDG) has been transforming lives one partnership at a time. From the first wobbly puppy steps to the powerful bond between an individual and their dog guide, every stage of the dog guide journey represents hope, independence and possibility for Canadians living with disabilities.

This GivingTuesday, the organization is inviting Canadians to go behind the scenes like never before with a special campaign called ‘Unlock the Dog Guide Journey.’ As donations come in, supporters will unveil each stage of the dog guide journey, from breeding and fostering to training, matching and life after graduation.

“Every donation truly opens a new chapter,” says Rick Perciante, interim director of resource development at LFCDG. “We wanted to give Canadians a glimpse of the care, love and expertise that go into raising each dog guide – and show how their generosity directly impacts lives.”

The campaign is powered by community spirit and a boost from

a longtime local partner. Lexus of Oakville is matching donations up to \$20,000 this GivingTuesday, doubling the impact of every gift. Its support, now in its ninth consecutive year, helps bring each stage of the journey to life, from fostering to training to the life-changing moment when a dog guide is matched with its person.

It costs \$35,000 to train and match just one dog guide, yet LFCDG provides them entirely free of charge to Canadians with disabilities. The program receives no government funding for operations, relying solely on donations from individuals, service clubs and corporate partners.

Throughout the day, the foundation will share updates on social media and by email, allowing Canadians to follow along as new stages are unlocked and more lives are changed.

“Every dollar, every share, every bit of support makes a real difference,” adds Mr. Perciante. “Together, we can open doors of independence and confidence for people across the country.”

Learn more: dogguides.com

Moments that impact a lifetime

Campaign raises funds to support youth who have experienced harm and trauma

Many people recall a pivotal moment in time when a chance encounter or a seemingly random choice determined their life's path. For the approximately 60,000 children and youth across Canada in the child welfare system as a result of abuse, neglect or abandonment, those moments are especially impactful.

In Brittany's case, the moment she recalls is when she knew she could give her own kids a future that would be very different from her own early childhood that was marked by trauma.

"The moment I knew I could break the cycle was when I joined Mothers in Mind, a Children's Aid Foundation of Canada-funded [CAFC] program. It gave me the tools to parent through trauma, not pass it on to my children. CAFC helped me build the



Brittany is a long-standing ambassador for Children's Aid Foundation of Canada. SUPPLIED

strength and love to give my kids a different future," she says.

This GivingTuesday, CAFC is asking Canadians for their help through 'The Moment I Knew' campaign, which is raising funds to support youth like Brittany who often carry heavy burdens related to trauma, instability, stigma, poverty and pressure to grow up too soon.

The campaign focuses on four key impact areas: helping children build and maintain stable, nurturing relationships; providing crucial counselling, peer support and wellness resources for youth in and from care struggling with their mental health; education through scholarships, tutoring and mentoring programs to empower youth to pursue and achieve their educational goals; and employment-focused initiatives that provide job training, career

counselling and financial assistance to help youth build stable futures.

Brittany has accessed support in all these areas. However, as she reflects on the Mothers in Mind program, she says she is grateful CAFC recognized the value of the initiative.

"It helps stop a lot of the intergenerational trauma that we experience as former youth in care, and it helps to break cycles of family violence," she adds.

Today, Brittany's passion lies in advocating for young people in care and striving to reduce the harm and trauma associated with the child welfare system. She is a long-standing ambassador for CAFC and served on the Young People's Advisory Council from 2022 to 2024.

Learn more: cafdn.org/moment

MELODIES AND MEMORIES

Sharing music with seniors to reduce social isolation

Julian Powell went from delivering food for Meals on Wheels to delivering personalized music playlists and initiating interactions with seniors when he established Music Share for Seniors, a Toronto-based charity that works to reduce social isolation for people living in long-term care and retirement homes.

While studying psychology at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) and taking courses through the university's Social Venture Zone – an incubator that supports organizations and non-profit startups focused on social good – Mr. Powell chose to volunteer with Meals on Wheels instead of writing an essay. That experience opened his eyes to the profound effects of social isolation. His subsequent research revealed that individuals living in long-term care facilities, particularly those with dementia, experience some of the highest levels of social isolation.

"Maybe if we could get people together through a shared love of music and develop regular social engagement it could be the start of something meaningful," says Mr. Powell.

“ GivingTuesday is fantastic because it gives people the opportunity to give and know they are having an impact. To be part of this wider tapestry of giving that takes place is empowering for those who are looking to make a difference.

Julian Powell
Founder and Executive Director
Music Share for Seniors



Through Music Share for Seniors, this resident in a retirement home enjoys spending time with a volunteer, sharing music and memories. SUPPLIED

The rest is history, and today Music Share partners with hundreds of seniors each month across 10 long-term care facilities, delivering programming at least once a week.

"Our programs are designed to reconnect isolated seniors back to special people, places and moments in their lives," says Mr. Powell. "At the same time, the programs offer

opportunities for conversation, socialization and relationship building, and since participants make requests for the music they enjoy, they can take an active role in building their own experience."

Youth volunteers and placement students who are interested in spending time one-on-one with seniors deliver the programs.

"The experience makes them more understanding of the needs of seniors in their community, more compassionate towards their elders and really helps to develop a more holistic view of what someone living in long-term care might go through," he adds.

GivingTuesday is an important day for Music Share.

"It's the biggest giving day of the year, and we've centred a campaign around GivingTuesday ever since we got our charitable status in 2022. Our supporters turn out to show just how much this mission really means to them," he says, adding GivingTuesday's core goal to encourage acts of kindness, volunteering and donations represents the same ethos as Music Share.

"GivingTuesday is fantastic because it gives people the opportunity to give and know they are having an impact. To be part of this wider tapestry of giving that takes place is empowering for those who are looking to make a difference," he says.

Learn more: musicshareforseniors.ca



OUR ISLAND INNOVATES

Vancouver Island, BC is setting the standard for what community hospitals can achieve, proving what is possible **when philanthropy leads the way.**



Learn More
VictoriaHF.ca/Globe



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