

# my ST. JOSEPH'S

A publication of St. Joseph's Health Care London  
SPRING 2022 | ISSUE 05

## HOVERING HOLOGRAMS HONE SURGEONS' SKILLS

Surgical visionary Dr. George Athwal at St. Joseph's Hospital has introduced a revolutionary new tool into operating rooms in Canada and far beyond.

A publication of St. Joseph's Health Care London  
Spring 2022 | Issue 05

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St. Joseph's Hospital

Parkwood Institute

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Centre for  
Long Term Care

Southwest Centre  
for Forensic  
Mental Health Care

Teams, clinics and programs in our  
community and beyond.



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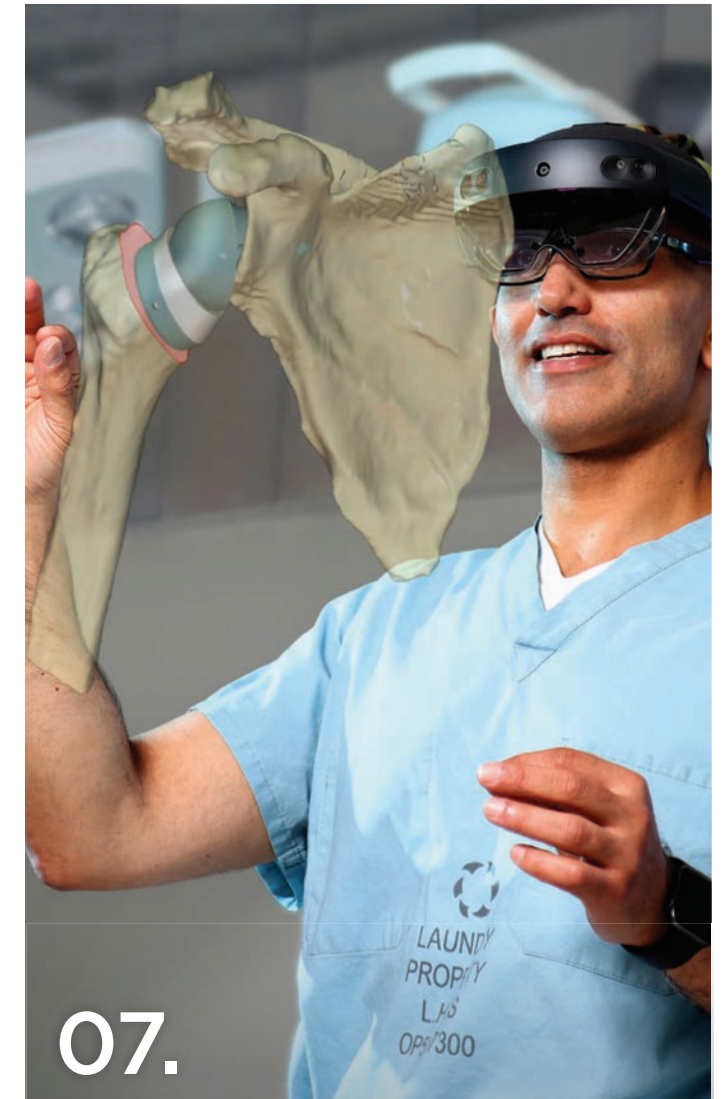
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Grace Hicks was able to get back in the saddle again with the help of Parkwood Institute's Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program. Her love of horseback riding was incorporated into her recovery plan after a devastating accident.

## A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOUR

*The expression "get back on the horse" was never more true for Grace Hicks – a young woman paralyzed in a horse-riding accident whose innovative rehabilitation team had her back in the saddle as part of her recovery.*

The smell of wet grass filled her nostrils as avid rider Grace Hicks tumbled with her horse when the mare slipped on sod slick from a rainfall the day before. In that moment, her life took a devastating turn.

"We both went down hard," says the 20-year-old. "It was a fluke accident. The right side of my body hit the ground, including my head."

The impact was severe. Grace was air-lifted to hospital and placed in a medically induced coma for a week to reduce brain swelling. When she awoke, she had lost the ability to talk and walk.

After a month at London Health Sciences Centre's Victoria Hospital, Grace was transferred to St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute for rehabilitation.

"At first Grace was not interactive at all," recalls physiotherapist Melissa Fielding, a member of Grace's care team in the Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program. "She was tired and despondent, and her body couldn't tolerate more than 15 minutes of physical activity each day."

It was October 2020 and the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was surging, limiting much-needed support Grace's parents could provide due to visiting restrictions. Rosemary and Steve could only look at their daughter through a window.

"I couldn't hold her hand or let her know we were there," says Rosemary. "Steve and I had no idea what her prognosis would be."

Slowly, however, Grace's body began to tolerate more activity as she worked with her rehabilitation team – speech language pathologist, occupational therapists and physiotherapists – and as her body healed.

"We all developed a great rapport and she trusted us to help her reach her goals," says Melissa.

The young woman's ultimate goal never wavered. She wanted to ride again.

"That was it," says Grace. "I wanted to get back on that horse!"

Once cleared to visit at the bedside, Rosemary and Steve watched and cheered as Grace began to regain movement.

"We celebrated every little accomplishment, every toe wiggle," recalls Rosemary.

The milestones came surprisingly quickly.

"Grace likes shock value," laughs her father. "The first time she walked we didn't even see her coming. She walked into the room. We were astonished. You can't even imagine the joy in seeing that."

Hoping to refer Grace to therapeutic riding after discharge, Melissa had to ensure the ardent equestrian had sufficient trunk balance.

While Grace could move from lying to sitting, standing and walking, could she sit on a horse? To find out, Melissa got creative. In the fitness gym at Parkwood Institute, she rigged up a bright yellow, peanut-shaped stability ball on a gurney and had Grace sit on top. As the team supported her from behind, the gurney was wheeled forward.

This horse of a different colour worked wonders for Grace's confidence and ability. The care team began working with Grace's riding coach, Shay Nejim from All About Horses, and, together, they developed a plan for riding and rehabilitation.

Within six weeks, Grace was discharged from Parkwood Institute – an achievement her parents attribute to the care team and Grace's love of riding.



After suffering a traumatic brain injury in 2020, Grace Hicks wasn't sure she would ever ride again. Today, the young equestrian is riding regularly.

**"I knew I had to get back on that horse. It meant everything to me."**

Two months later, the team received an update – a photo of Grace beaming from atop an actual horse. Today, she is riding regularly and considering joining a horse-jumping team.

"I have been basically riding horses since I was born," says Grace. "I knew I had to get back on that horse. It meant everything to me. That's how I was going to recover."

Still careful and cautious, and never taking her recovery for granted, Grace is literally back in the saddle, and so happy to be there.



Riding coach Shay Nejim, right, from All About Horses works with Grace Hicks to regain her confidence and sense of balance while riding her horse. Last year, Grace suffered a devastating accident that left her unable to move or talk.



## PROTECTING A MOST PRECIOUS GIFT – OUR ABILITY TO SEE

*The generosity of donors is expanding specialized retina care at St. Joseph's Ivey Eye Institute to meet a growing demand for services.*

Delicate and intricately complex, it's essential for vision. It's also a common culprit in the loss of that gift.

The retina contains millions of cells that work together to detect light and communicate with the brain. But aging and various health conditions can lead to retina complications that can cause vision loss if left untreated. Over the last decade, the number of patients needing retina care at St. Joseph's Ivey Eye Institute has increased 50 per cent – a trend that's expected to continue as Canada's population ages.

Faced with rising demand for retina care, Ivey Eye reached out to St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation with a proposal to expand its Retina Care Program space. Last year the foundation launched a campaign to raise funds needed for the renovation and hundreds of generous donors stepped up to the challenge, contributing more than \$560,000.

“As an ophthalmologist and surgeon at the Ivey Eye Institute, it's an incredible feeling to know how much the community stands behind the care we provide,” says Dr. Tom Sheidow. “Many retina issues can be treated or reversed if we catch them early enough – and donor contributions will help make that possible.”

Renovations to convert existing office space into four, new retina exam rooms will begin this summer. Each room will be outfitted with the latest diagnostic equipment and a new waiting area will provide a comfortable place for patients and caregivers to sit and relax. For people living with retinal issues, these changes will ensure timely access to care, less waiting and the best possible outcomes.

The newly expanded space will give researchers the ability to trial treatments for diseases like dry age-related macular degeneration (AMD). More than 80 per cent of patients with AMD have a ‘dry’ form of the disease, which currently has no treatment options.



*Donors to St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation are helping to enhance specialized retina care at the Ivey Eye Institute to meet a growing demand for services.*

### IVEY EYE INSTITUTE GROWTH

**11** ⇒ **21**  
OPHTHALMOLOGISTS

Since it was constructed in 1998, the Ivey Eye Institute has grown from 11 ophthalmologists to 21.

**70,000** ⇒ **135,000**  
PATIENTS PER YEAR

In 1998, the Ivey Eye Institute cared for 70,000 patients per year. Today, the skilled team sees more than 135,000 patients per year.

*Through assessments and treatments, Ivey Eye Institute is a vital lifeline to people at risk of losing their vision.*

### THE RETINA CARE PROGRAM TREATS VARIOUS COMPLICATIONS, INCLUDING:

#### AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD):

When the central part of the retina deteriorates, it results in blurriness in the centre of vision. AMD affects up to one third of people over age 75 and is the leading cause of vision loss for those age 50 and older. Regular injections can stop the progression of “wet” AMD that causes leaky blood vessels.

#### RETINAL TEARS:

A tear occurs when the retina partially pulls away from the back of the eye, requiring immediate attention. Ophthalmologists are able to repair these tears using a laser to prevent permanent vision loss.”

#### DIABETIC RETINOPATHY:

This complication of diabetes occurs due to fluctuations in blood glucose levels impacting the health of the blood vessels in the retina. It's the leading cause of blindness for people age 25 to 75, but laser treatment and injections can prevent blood vessel leakage, growth and repair some of the damages.”

### YOUR DONATION MATTERS HERE

The expansion of the Retina Care Program at the Ivey Eye Institute is critical to enhancing vision care for the region. Now, thanks to donor support through St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation, renovations will help ensure timely access to care, less waiting and the best possible outcomes for thousands of people who rely on St. Joseph's Health Care London for specialized retina care.



Orthopedic surgeon Dr. George Athwal at the Roth / McFarlane Hand and Upper Limb Centre was the first in Canada, and second in the world, to bring ground-breaking hologram technology into the operating room to enhance surgical precision during shoulder replacement surgery.

## HOVERING HOLOGRAMS HONE SURGEONS' SKILLS

**Surgeon Dr. George Athwal at St. Joseph's Health Care London was the first in Canada and second in the world to use revolutionary mixed reality technology as a tool in shoulder replacement surgery.**

At the Roth | McFarlane Hand and Upper Limb Centre at St. Joseph's Hospital, orthopedic surgeon Dr. George Athwal has become a Canadian pioneer in the development and use of digital 3D holograms to enhance surgical precision for shoulder replacement patients, which is expected to reduce complications and improve outcomes.

Digital holograms are a revolution in the field of interactive 'mixed reality' technology, which is emerging as an exciting new tool in operating rooms. Part of a team who developed the technology for shoulder replacement surgery, Dr. Athwal was the first surgeon in Canada to perform a mixed reality shoulder replacement, and second in the world.

Mixed reality is the "mix" of immersive computer-generated environments and the "real" physical environment. By pairing hologram technology with pre-operative planning software, Dr. Athwal and his team gave birth to 3D holograms that can guide the most intricate surgical manoeuvres as they happen during shoulder replacement surgery.

**"It is a groundbreaking tool that allows me to replicate the surgical plan very precisely."**

Wearing a specially-designed headset, Dr. Athwal uses verbal commands and hand gestures – moving his hands through the air – to manipulate a digital 3D hologram of the patient's anatomy and the metallic implant, which is based on a CT scan of the patient's bones. The technology is used for pre-surgery planning and in the operating room during the actual surgery. Dr. Athwal has the hologram hovering – or rather parked in space – within reach for reference as he operates.

"It is a groundbreaking tool that allows me to replicate the surgical plan very precisely," says Dr. Athwal. "I am able to see issues with impingement of the joint replacement and ensure the best fit for the implant, which will hopefully provide the best outcome for the patient."

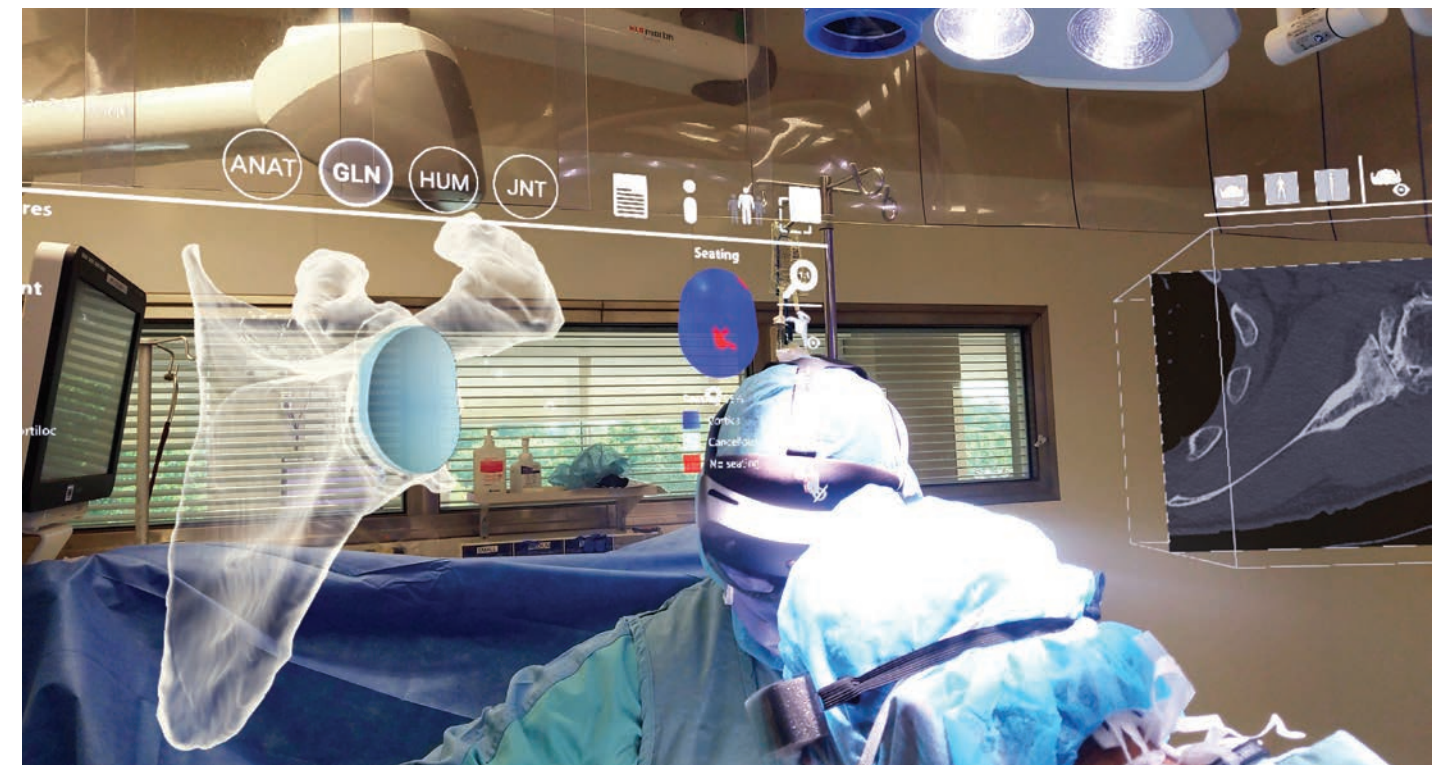
Dr. Athwal worked with Stryker, a manufacturer of shoulder implants, and Microsoft Corporation, manufacturer of the HoloLens 2 – a holographic headset – to develop the mixed reality shoulder replacement technique.



There are now surgeons in multiple countries using this tool, says Dr. Athwal, who has since performed numerous surgeries using the technology and is in demand to provide demonstrations world-wide.

**"We all want the best for our patients. We want them to have the most positive results and this technology adds another layer to ensure that happens."**

*...continued*



During shoulder replacement surgery, orthopedic surgeon Dr. George Athwal at St. Joseph's Hospital parks a digital 3D hologram within reach for reference as he operates. The hologram is of the patient's anatomy and the metallic implant, which is based on a CT scan of the patient's bones.

Interest in mixed reality technology to enhance surgery is starting to take flight, adds Dr. Athwal.

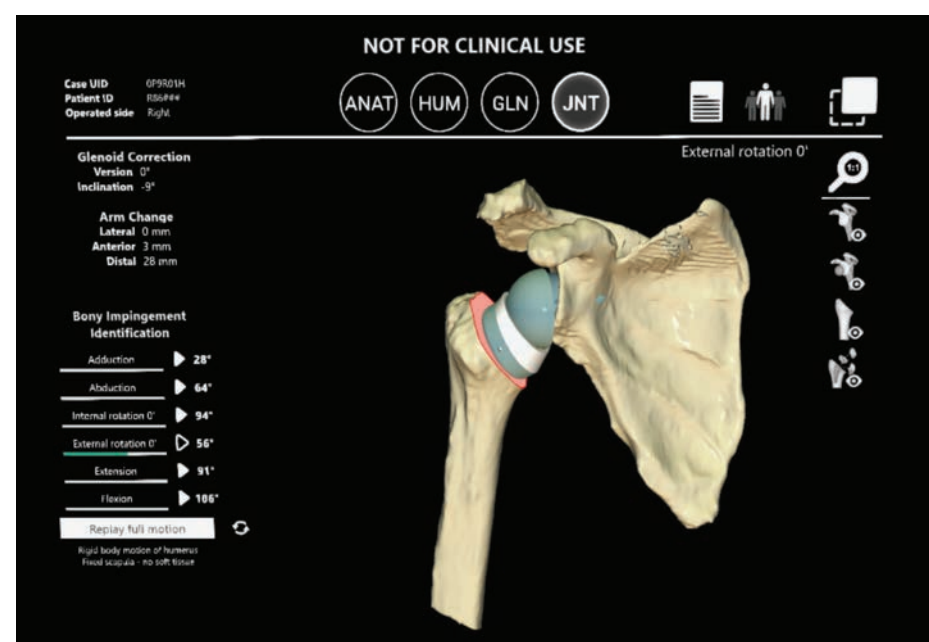
“It’s really helping physicians do a precise and fine-tuned shoulder replacement, which will hopefully result in a lower complication rate and therefore a higher success rate and increased longevity of the newly replaced joint. We all want the best for our patients. We want them to have the most positive results and this technology adds another layer to ensure that happens.”

**“Quite simply, we want to make better surgeons and safer operations.”**

At the Roth | McFarlane Hand and Upper Limb Centre, a world-renowned centre of excellence in education, research, diagnosis and treatment of complex conditions of the hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder, the technology is available for patients needing shoulder replacements (arthroplasty), such as total shoulder arthroplasty or reverse shoulder arthroplasty.



Dr. George Athwal at St. Joseph’s Hospital worked with Stryker, a manufacturer of shoulder implants, and Microsoft Corporation, manufacturer of the HoloLens 2 – a holographic headset – to develop a mixed reality shoulder replacement technique.



The holograms are based on a CT scan of the patient’s bones taken before surgery. The 3D image helps surgeon Dr. George Athwal at St. Joseph’s Health Care London plan the operation and guide the procedure.

There is more to come, hints an enthused Dr. Athwal, who envisions tremendous possibilities for the futuristic technology in the operating room. Propelling this visionary work, however, is the most basic of intentions, says the world-class surgeon with a penchant for engineering.

“Quite simply, we want to make better surgeons and safer operations.”

## GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

**A multi-centre research team has uncovered how a common procedure essential in treating heart attack can lead to heart failure in some patients.**

A heart attack can be deadly, but there are effective life-saving procedures if treated in time. Now, one of these procedures has been found to carry its own lethal risk.

The most common treatment of heart attack is called reperfusion therapy during which the blocked coronary artery causing the heart attack is opened and a stent is inserted to let blood flow freely again.

In a recent published study by a multi-centre research team at Lawson Health Research Institute, St. Joseph’s Health Care London and a number of other institutions across the globe, scientists examined a condition called reperfusion injury, a problem that can take place following reperfusion therapy and a concept that had yet to be scientifically proven, until now.

**“Those who experience a myocardial hemorrhage have a much larger piece of their heart muscle die than those who don’t have hemorrhage.”**

“When you open up the coronary artery in someone experiencing a heart attack, the blood starts to flow. However, we found there are a number of factors

that lead to other injuries due to opening up the vessel,” explains Rohan Dharmakumar (PhD), Executive Director of the Krannert Cardiovascular Research Center at Indiana University.

For example, when the blocked coronary artery is opened with reperfusion therapy, the blood flowing into narrower vessels can cause the smaller vessels to burst, which can lead to myocardial hemorrhage – internal bleeding within the heart muscle.

“Those who experience a myocardial hemorrhage have a much larger piece of their heart muscle die than those who don’t have hemorrhage,” says Frank Prato (PhD), Imaging Program Lead and Assistant Scientific Director at Lawson. “We have been able to show that if there is hemorrhage due to reperfusion injury, the size of the dead tissue within the heart grows, which can then lead to heart failure.”

After studying 70 patients with heart attacks, the research team was able to show reperfusion injury led to hemorrhage in more than 50 per cent of patients being treated for a heart attack.

The outcome isn’t immediate – heart failure can start a few years after the heart attack, explains Rohan.

“So, even though we are saving people initially from a heart attack, we are still losing a lot of people to heart failure within the first five years.”

This discovery was made possible through the use of Lawson’s cyclotron, a machine that produces isotopes for advanced PET/MRI scans at St. Joseph’s.

“To validate the study with a PET/MRI, we needed a specific radioactive isotope called nitrogen 13 ammonia,” explains Mike Kovacs (PhD), Director of Lawson’s Nordal Cyclotron & PET Radiochemistry Facility. “We were able to create this isotope and went through Health Canada approval, so now we can use it in pre-clinical models as well as with human patients.”

The study’s findings will allow the research team to examine different forms of therapies that can be used in combination with reperfusion therapy to improve patient outcomes.



Lawson Health Research Institute’s Nordal Cyclotron & PET Radiochemistry Facility was key in validating research looking at damage that can occur after life-saving treatment for heart attack.



Mark Alfieri transformed his eating habits and has been able to go off all diabetes medications after learning about the connection between food, lifestyle and health at the Primary Care Diabetes Support Program of St. Joseph's Health Care London.

## ST. JOSEPH'S PRESCRIBES LIFESTYLE AS MEDICINE

*Through a novel program, patients living with type 2 diabetes will receive coaching and confidence to make food and activity central to self-care, with wearable technology providing real-time motivation.*



For years, 58-year-old Mark Alfieri had missed all the signs of type 2 diabetes. The ones he did notice – numbness and pain in his hands and feet – he dismissed as part of a long-standing back injury.

He also admits to abusing his body with less than stellar eating habits and an addiction to sugar. But with no family doctor, his diabetes wasn't detected until he received care for a broken shoulder in 2020.

"The day I broke my shoulder, breakfast was a box of Cheese Nibs, Brisk lemonade and a KitKat bar. I wish I was kidding. I kept M&M's chocolate-covered almonds in my pocket at all times and would finish a two litre bottle of regular Coke at one go – filling my glass until it was empty. I lived on starches and carbs for dinner and would be in the bakery a couple of times a week buying pies and cannolis. I was being horrible to myself."

That all changed when Mark was referred to the Primary Care Diabetes Support Program (PCDSP) of St. Joseph's Health Care London.

It wasn't the diabetes medications he was prescribed that turned his life around. It was what he learned about the connection between food, lifestyle and health.

For those living with type 2 diabetes, good understanding of the benefits of food and activity is essential to self-management, and ensuring patients have the knowledge they need is central to effective diabetes education. But the PCDSP is going further. In an innovative step, the PCDSP will be launching a powerful, new approach to lifestyle as medicine and inviting anyone living with type 2 diabetes in London to participate.

Called LIBERATE (LIBre Enabled Reduction of A1c Through Effective Eating and Exercise), the approach focuses on empowering and encouraging those living with type 2 diabetes to use food and activity to support blood sugar (glycemic) control and improve overall health, explains Amanda Mikalachki, registered nurse with the PCDSP and LIBERATE co-investigator.



*Wearable technology, including a flash glucose monitor and a wrist activity tracker, will provide biofeedback to support lifestyle changes for participants of LIBERATE, a new education program being launched by the Primary Care Diabetes Support Program of St. Joseph's Health Care London.*

All new patients referred to the PCDSP will be invited to attend a one-hour introductory lifestyle medicine group class, which is designed to motivate and build awareness of the opportunity to make small, sustainable lifestyle changes that can translate into improved diabetes management and overall health, explains Amanda. Patients will then have the option to take part in LIBERATE – a virtual bi-weekly group education class with six to eight patients per group for three months, followed by a monthly class for an additional three months.

**"Our team has always recognized that patients living with type 2 diabetes need strong and innovative support to adopt and sustain healthy lifestyle patterns."**

Those living with type 2 diabetes who are not patients of the PCDSP will also be able to participate. In the coming weeks, recruitment will get underway through family physician offices and corporations in the city, or individuals will be able to call directly if they are interested in taking part.

Making the program unique is its virtual format as well as the use of wearable technology to provide biofeedback to support lifestyle changes aligned to the glycemic and health goals set by each patient. The technology, which will be provided to participants, includes both a flash glucose monitor, which measures, displays and stores glucose readings, and a wrist activity tracker.

The program builds upon an earlier 12-week PCDSP program that found the wearable technology and virtual class format – initiated when the pandemic swept in – contributed to a powerful and meaningful learning experience for patients.

For Mark, the 12-week program was not only eye-opening, it was life-saving. "I learned how my body processes food and the wearable technology was critical in seeing just how my body was reacting to my food choices."

Through lifestyle medicine, Mark has been able to transform his diet and go off all diabetes medications. He's proud to report that he has eliminated processed sugar and slashed his carb intake.

*...continued*



Mark Alfieri is focused on a healthy lifestyle and credits the Primary Care Diabetes Support Program of St. Joseph's Health Care London for turning his life around.

"I lost a sister to type 1 diabetes and I was on the same path with my health," says Mark. "It was live or die. I had a choice. St. Joseph's saved my life."

St. Joseph's introduction on how to use lifestyle medicine to improve health "is sometimes the first time a patient has attended a diabetes appointment where they were offered self-management treatment options that move beyond the typical approach to care, which often only focuses on medication intensification," says Betty Harvey, nurse practitioner with the PCDS and LIBERATE co-investigator.

Since the PCDS was created in 2008 at St. Joseph's Family Medical and Dental Centre, the team has become a leader in evidence-based lifestyle intervention for those living with type 2 diabetes. The program's approach has been a model for community physicians and other centres.

**"We know lifestyle medicine can have a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of people living with type 2 diabetes."**

"Our team has always recognized that patients living with type 2 diabetes need strong and innovative support to adopt and sustain healthy lifestyle patterns," says Dr. Sonja Reichert, a physician with the PCDS and Principle Investigator of the LIBERATE trial. "With each successive year, our program has grown and evolved, benefiting our patients and providing leadership to other Canadian diabetes centres looking to operationalize effective, feasible ways to incorporate lifestyle as medicine."

LIBERATE, a Lawson Health Research Institute study, will be a two-year, multi-site clinical trial that will begin this spring at the PCDS. A launch at Hamilton Health Sciences' Boris Clinic in Diabetes Care and Research Program is also planned.

"We know lifestyle medicine can have a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of people living with type 2 diabetes," says Dr. Reichert. "Ultimately, we would like to create a health care practitioner coaching guide and see the LIBERATE approach available and easily accessible across the country."



More information on the LIBERATE clinical trial of St. Joseph's Primary Care Diabetes Support Program will be coming soon. Watch for details on St. Joseph's website.



Registered nurse Amanda Mikalachki, left, and Dr. Sonja Reichert at the Primary Care Diabetes Support Program of St. Joseph's Health Care London are launching a novel program focused on lifestyle as medicine for those living with type 2 diabetes.

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At St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute, Veteran Edith Street, left, works with art instructor Rachel Woolmore-Goodwin on a special piece of artwork in recognition of the Veterans Arts Program's 75th anniversary.

## THE ART OF PAYING TRIBUTE

**Veterans at St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute recently celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Veterans Arts Program with a handcrafted piece of artwork.**

Nestled within St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute lies three extensive art studios filled with paints, canvases, fabrics, wood, clay and other materials waiting to be transformed into pieces of art. The men and women behind the paintbrushes and crafty creations are veterans who reside at Parkwood Institute as part of the Veterans Care Program.

Veterans can find fulfillment in the arts as a group on the units or in one of three art studios – wood, clay and textiles. Providing an opportunity to socialize, explore individual talents and hone new skills, art projects are adapted to fit the abilities of each individual, minimizing limitations while maximizing creativity.

This year, a special project was an important focus for the veterans. To mark the 75th anniversary of the Veterans Arts Program, the number 75 was created out of wood and adorned with painted silk, ceramic, wool, stained glass and other materials. The veterans, with the assistance of art instructors, helped design, craft and paint the artwork.

**“To build and maintain a therapeutic relationship with a veteran requires a great deal of trust, compassion and understanding.”**

“The vision for our tribute piece was to celebrate the diversity of art mediums and techniques that we offer in the program,” says art instructor Rachel Woolmore-Goodwin. “With everything from silk painting to stained glass, we have a robust variety of materials to work with in our studios, providing our veterans with limitless opportunities for creativity.”

Four art instructors at Parkwood Institute assist the veterans with the meaningful projects they create. The artwork is typically sold at events held at Parkwood Institute, with profits going to the veteran artist and a small portion directed back into the program to cover the cost of materials. Purchases can also be made directly within the studios. This year, due to the pandemic, art sales were available to select staff, family and caregivers only to protect the safety of the veterans.

From silk scarves, pottery and paintings to decorative cards – the collection of work is a labour of love for all those involved.

“Being a part of their journey is an incredible privilege,” says Rachel. “To build and maintain a therapeutic relationship with a veteran requires a great deal of trust, compassion, and understanding. I am truly honoured to be of service to the people who have served us and have already given so much of themselves to others throughout their lives.”

### BRUSHING UP ON HISTORY

The roots of the Veterans Arts Program at Parkwood Institute run deep – dating back to the Second World War when the Red Cross offered handicrafts to recuperating soldiers in military hospitals overseas. As these veterans returned to Canada, they requested to continue the program.

In 1946, the Canadian Red Cross Society and Veterans Affairs Canada developed a national program called Arts & Crafts.



Veteran John Spivey, left, proudly displays his hand-crafted purse with Veterans Arts Program instructor Kim Smith.

It was designed for hospitalized veterans who did not require occupational therapy or physiotherapy but wanted to keep busy with creative activities, such as weaving, leather crafts and woodworking. The program included veterans from the First and Second World War and eventually those from the Korean War.

In 1994, the Red Cross began to transfer the program to facilities, such as Parkwood Institute. Today, the Veterans Arts Program is fully funded by Veterans Affairs Canada with generous donations from the Royal Canadian Legion. Over the past decade, the program has expanded to include younger veterans seeking treatment at Parkwood Institute.

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Artwork made by veterans at Parkwood Institute Main Building celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Veterans Arts Program and marks the 100th anniversary of the remembrance poppy in Canada. The unique piece hangs outside the Veterans Art Program studios at Parkwood Institute.

## STUDIO HIGHLIGHTS

Over the years, the Veterans Arts Program at Parkwood Institute has seen many notable projects come to life. Some of the initiatives include the following:

### 2000:

‘Tales Worth Telling’ was published – the first in a series of four books featuring veterans’ stories as told to Veterans Arts staff.

### 2006:

To commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Veterans Arts, an image of artwork created by the veterans was used on a Canada Post stamp and distributed throughout Canada.

### 2011:

To mark the historic transfer of St. Joseph’s perinatal program to London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC), veterans and a group of perinatal nurses combined their artistic talents to create a large stained glass-inspired silk painting to hang in the new space at LHSC. There, the art serves as a meaningful and permanent reminder of the illustrious legacy of perinatal and obstetric care at St. Joseph’s.

### 2018:

In partnership with the Grand Theatre, veterans created more than 4,000 hand-made poppies. Each crafted poppy, made with a touch of black paint and simple red cupcake liners, was proudly displayed as part of the set for the Grand Theatre production of Timothy Findley’s ‘The Wars.’



*Veteran Charles Astles sands a woodworking project by hand in one of three arts studios at Parkwood Institute.*

Volunteers, family members and the community all took part in creating the poppies at Parkwood Institute.

### 2019:

Veterans molded, painted and glazed beads for the Bravery Bead Program at LHSC’s Children’s Hospital. The program helps children and families note their journey through a long-term illness or injury. Children receive a ‘starter necklace’ which includes a string and beads to spell their name. They then collect beads to acknowledge the many experiences they face over the course of treatment, with each bead representing different elements of the treatment process. The veterans personally delivered their ‘warrior beads’ to young patients in hospital.

### 2019:

Dubbed the Poppy Pin Campaign, veterans hand made more than 100 small clay poppies to give as a gift to all the volunteers of the Veterans Care Program.

The pins were a symbol of the veterans’ gratitude for the hard work and dedication of the volunteers.

### 2020:

The first of three veterans calendars was created, each month featuring an individual veteran with a brief bio that they chose to share.

## THE PANDEMIC TOLL ON VETERANS

*In newly-published findings from Lawson Health Research Institute, more than half of Canadian veterans report a decline in their mental health over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

When it comes to mental illness, veterans are an at-risk population, often having higher rates of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, scientists at Lawson Health Research Institute wanted to understand its effects on this already-vulnerable population.

“We anticipated the ongoing pandemic would have impacts to multiple domains of life such as loneliness, isolation, depression and PTSD,” says Anthony Nazarov (PhD), associate scientist at Lawson’s MacDonald Franklin Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Research Centre located at St. Joseph’s Parkwood Institute.



To examine the potential impacts, the research team launched a longitudinal study in early 2021, recruiting Canadian veterans and spouses of Canadian veterans. A total of 1,136 veterans have participated in the study, which spans more than 18 months. Participants complete online questionnaires every three months, with questions focused on mental health and use of virtual health care services.

The team recently published preliminary findings based on the veterans portion of the study, which confirm a decline in mental health among the veterans that took part.

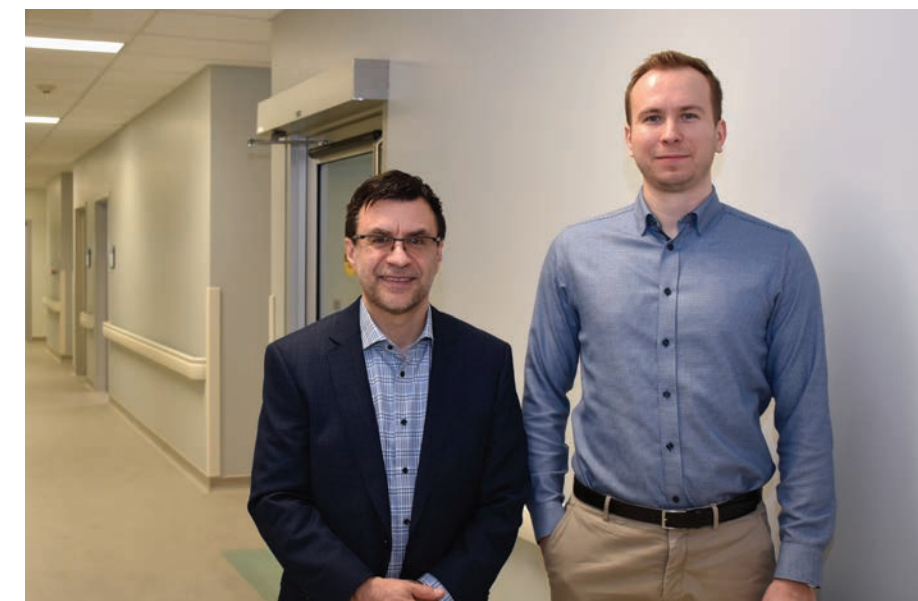
**“Veterans have been having positive experiences with virtual care for mental health support.”**

“One of the important preliminary findings demonstrated a little more than 55 per cent of veterans (55.9 per cent) have indicated that their mental health has worsened over the pandemic,” explains psychiatrist Dr. Don Richardson, Scientific Director of the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre.

The findings also revealed that nearly one in five veterans used virtual health care and telepsychiatry services, and found them to be helpful.

“Veterans have been having positive experiences with virtual care for mental health support,” says Anthony. “Most found it helpful, and more importantly, many would like to continue to use this form of health care services even post pandemic.”

The study’s preliminary findings have been published in the *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*. The longitudinal study will wrap up this summer and it’s hoped the information will lead to improved and innovative mental health supports for veterans and their spouses.



*Psychiatrist Dr. Don Richardson, left, and researcher Anthony Nazarov (PhD), both scientists with Lawson Health Research Institute, are studying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of veterans.*

## PARTNERING TO IMPROVE CARE

*Across St. Joseph's Health Care London, caregivers of patients and residents are considered key partners in care.*

From the first day of her husband's stay at St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute, Brenda Martin felt she had a voice. It would make all the difference during the frightening and life-changing situation she suddenly found herself

It was early one morning in 2019 when Brenda's husband Paul asked her to call 911, saying he couldn't feel his legs. After days of testing, Paul was diagnosed with acute onset transverse myelitis, a rare neuroimmune disorder where inflammation damages the insulating material (myelin) covering the nerves along the spine. Without this protective coating, signals from the brain to the spine and back cannot occur. Paul was paralyzed from the waist down.

Paul came to the Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Rehabilitation Program at Parkwood Institute where he had to relearn to sit, stand and walk.

"Our world and how we could live in it changed. All of a sudden everything you thought you had planned for the future had to stop and be re-evaluated," remembers Brenda.

Throughout Paul's recovery journey, Brenda was involved as a partner in his care.

**"It's been empowering for us because it's made us realize that our voices are important. We also feel like people in our health system really do care about us."**

"Being included was really powerful for me. It made a big difference having a voice. From the first day... (the team) made sure I was included in his schedule, made sure I knew I was welcome to participate in his therapies. It made me less afraid. I was touched that people wanted my input, wanted to know how I felt because in the midst of this type of trauma, you sort of feel forgotten."

Partnering with patients, residents and caregivers is the responsibility of all who work and practice at St. Joseph's, supported by the organization's Care Partnership Office. As part of this commitment, Brenda and Paul were invited to become formal care partners with the rehabilitation team, working to co-design a patient information portal as part of a research project. They also provided input on tools to help patients and caregivers navigate life after a spinal cord injury.

**"If we can help others – that's the best."**

"It's been empowering for us because it's made us realize that our voices are important," says Brenda. "We also feel like people in our health care system really do care about us."

Brenda and Paul enjoyed their care partner roles so much they became members of Parkwood Institute Main Building's Patient and Family Caregiver Advisory Council made up of patients, caregivers and staff from all care areas at that site. Council members are provided opportunities to co-design care delivery – from participating in creating and reviewing patient information and education materials, to sharing ideas on the construction of new spaces, like the revamped cafeteria.

Sharing her knowledge, says Brenda, has helped her move forward.

"If we can give our time and our input with lived experience and maybe make the system a little bit better for the next person, then that means this hasn't all been in vain. If we can help others – that's the best."



## Become a Patient or Family Partner

Your involvement drives change

### BECOME A PATIENT OR FAMILY PARTNER

Do you have a passion for enhancing the health care experience for patients and families? Patient and family partners at St. Joseph's Health Care London volunteer to provide valuable insight and ideas to help improve the quality and safety of care based on their own experiences.

#### CARE PARTNER ROLES CAN BE IN:

- **Storytelling:** Share your personal health care experiences and learning.
- **Committees and Councils:** Serve on groups that advise on, plan and manage specific functions.
- **Quality Improvement Initiatives:** Partner with staff to improve services and processes.
- **Research initiatives through Lawson Health Research Institute:** Help guide new developments in health care.
- **Hiring Panel:** Be involved in staff recruitment and hiring

Partnering with St. Joseph's is flexible based on individual needs, interests and time. Care partners can get involved in person, remotely via phone or by the internet.



Want to learn more about becoming a Care Partner?

Visit: [sjhc.london.on.ca/carepartnership](http://sjhc.london.on.ca/carepartnership)



At St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute, Brenda Marin and husband Paul Garrett are cheered on by Paul's care team after he met his rehabilitation goal of walking out of the building on his own.



For long-time volunteer Marnie McEwen, the gift shop at St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute Main Building is "a place to witness miracles and be among friends."

## STOCKED WITH COMPASSION

**After a lengthy pause due to the pandemic, Marnie McEwen was eager to return to her volunteer role at St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute and the special connections she left behind.**

As COVID-19 restrictions began to ease, there was a special store in London that Marnie McEwen couldn't wait to get back to, but not to shop. For more than 15 years, Marnie has been a devoted volunteer in the gift shop at St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute.

"People's safety was paramount during the pandemic," says Marnie. "But I couldn't wait to get back into the store again. It's a great social outlet for me and I missed seeing everyone."

Stocking shelves, ordering products and ringing in sales are just some of Marnie's duties at the busy General Store. At the initial outset of the pandemic, however, all volunteer roles were put on hold and the store closed.

With new safety measures now in place and loosening restrictions, St. Joseph's is once again opening its doors to volunteers.

"Our volunteers are extremely passionate and dedicated," says Tracy Drenth, Coordinator of Volunteer Services at St. Joseph's Health Care London. "They are an integral part of the St. Joseph's team and we are eager to welcome many of them back again safely."

While ensuring a good supply of sweets, cards and gifts is an important part of her role, Marnie explains that it's the people who walk through the door that has kept her volunteering for so many years.

"It's a unique setting because a lot of the patients at Parkwood Institute are here for an extended period of time while they receive care," explains Marnie. "Patients often come in on a regular basis and you get to know them. It becomes a place to gather and it has a real family feeling to it."

At the same time, Marnie is keenly aware that some patients have a lot on their minds.

"I have seen some patients unable to walk due to injuries and months later they walk into my store because of the rehabilitation care they have received at St. Joseph's," explains Marnie. "It's amazing to see their journey and offer a smile or a few words of encouragement to brighten their day."

Marnie also adds that many World War II veterans who reside at Parkwood Institute also stop into the store to say hello or share stories.

"It's a place of miracles but it's also a place to create friendships, make someone's day a little brighter and connect with each other," adds Marnie. "I am so glad to be back!"



### Interested in becoming a volunteer?

If you're interested in making a difference in the experience of patients, residents and their families, St. Joseph's Health Care London may have an opportunity for you!

Visit: [sjhc.london.on.ca/volunteers](http://sjhc.london.on.ca/volunteers)

## HARNESSING THE POWER OF PAPER TOWELS

**St. Joseph's Health Care London has been on a mission to cut waste everywhere possible and reduce the organization's environmental footprint.**

Paper towels are often thrown into the garbage after use, but where do they go, and what is the impact on the environment?

This is a question Environmental Services (EVS) at St. Joseph's Health Care London recently tackled and the team has now found a solution that is eliminating paper towels from landfills and fueling another source of renewable energy.

In April 2021, the EVS team began adding the recycling of paper towels in washrooms to their composting program. While paper towel is not recyclable, it can be composted. In a phased approach, bins are being placed in washrooms across the organization to collect discarded paper towels. They are picked up by Kevron Recycling, one of St. Joseph's environmental partners, for composting and converting into renewable energy at local facilities, says Thomas Mercer, Director of EVS.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, the paper towel composting efforts have diverted an impressive 469.5 kilograms of paper towel from landfill.

The daycare centre at Parkwood Institute is among the locations now collecting paper towels. Children wash their hands and toss the paper towel into collection bins, with the added hope that a future generation will be aware and knowledgeable about the impacts of waste on the environment.

In addition to paper towels, St. Joseph's has a robust and efficient organics recycling program, which includes unavoidable waste such as food scraps and vegetable peelings.

Composting bins are located in kitchens across St. Joseph's where organic waste is collected.

"With Kevron's services, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) staff do not have to separate packaging waste from food waste," explains Thomas. "Almost all waste items from returned food trays can be put into the organics bin. Kevron separates the organic items from the packaging items and both are recycled."

Food waste often winds up in landfills, where it rots and releases large quantities of methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.

"Previously, St. Joseph's organics recycling program accepted only food items," adds Thomas. "The partnership with Kevron has significantly simplified tray cleaning and separation of food and other items for FNS, increased the amount of recycling and reduced the amount of waste going to the landfill site."



In 2021, 877,506.6 kilograms of waste was diverted from landfill through various environmental programs at St. Joseph's.

"The team effort and enthusiasm of staff and our partners in making such a positive difference for the environment has been outstanding," says Thomas. "St. Joseph's believes that a healthy and sustainable environment is a necessary foundation for human health. Our values of respect, excellence and compassion encompass caring for our planet to ensure a better and healthier environment for patients, residents, staff and our community."

### DID YOU KNOW?

**144,886.9**

kilograms of organics St. Joseph's diverted in 2021 produced enough renewable energy to power



homes for an entire year.

**877,506.6**

kilograms was diverted from landfill in 2021 through various environmental programs at St. Joseph's.



lamps from Mount Hope Centre for Long Term Care in 2018 were recycled totaling 332 kilograms of glass; 11.3 kilograms of metal; 4.5 kilograms of phosphor; 5.9 kilograms of porcelain and 80.33 kilograms of plastic.

**25x**

more harmful than carbon dioxide is the methane gas produced by rotting organics in landfills.

# my ST. JOSEPH'S

St. Joseph's Health Care London provides care through a unique mix of clinical settings - making us one of the most complex health care organizations in Ontario. In a continual effort to bring the best care possible to those we serve, we constantly engage patients and their families, leaders, physicians, staff, volunteers, donors and many partners to ensure St. Joseph's takes innovative steps in addressing the health care needs of our community, now and in the future.

## MY ST. JOSEPH'S IS

St. Joseph's Hospital

Parkwood Institute

Mount Hope  
Centre for  
Long Term Care

Southwest Centre  
for Forensic  
Mental Health Care

Teams, clinics and programs in our  
community and beyond.

## SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK OR STORY WITH US

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