



Reta Ismail and her son Nero

The Anticipation of a New Baby - *Reta's Story*

I remember the moment my son Nero was born like it was yesterday. For the first time in my life, I felt my heart beating on the outside.

It was truly the best moment of my life being able to hold him in my arms and kiss his little forehead for the very first time. He will be turning five this August and I am now pregnant with baby number two. But this is not my second pregnancy. Like many women, I have suffered from pregnancy loss – twice in the last three years. I lost a set of twins in 2015 and then had another miscarriage the following year.

The past several months have had their long, sluggish days full of nausea and illness, but I am so grateful to have made it this far in my pregnancy.

"I would take all of these symptoms along with a handful more knowing that I will get to hold my healthy baby girl in a few months."

Due to my medical history with the last two unsuccessful pregnancies, my family doctor said I might be considered high risk, so I was referred to the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at London Health

Continued from previous page

Sciences Centre (LHSC). I can't say enough good things about the staff at the hospital. My physician, Dr. Barbra de Vrijer, along with staff and all the nurses, have been phenomenal – accommodating my schedule and greeting me with smiles and a calm nature that puts me at ease during every visit.

I first met Dr. de Vrijer when I was pregnant with my twins. She reviewed my ultrasounds and had to break the news to me that the pregnancy wouldn't end well. She is compassionate, highly educated and an asset to the hospital. I went to see Dr. de Vrijer with this pregnancy at 12 weeks to review my dating ultrasound and my first trimester blood work. The results came back with concern that my baby would have a slight chance of developing a chromosome disorder and that I required further testing. My husband and I wanted to be prepared, so we decided to move forward with the testing. Results take up to 10 business days and the waiting was agonizing. Because of my past experience, I couldn't help but fear the worst.

Thankfully, our results came back indicating a very low risk for any abnormalities. After reviewing my 20-week anatomy scan, my doctor reassured me that the baby is growing and everything is going according to plan.

While I was waiting to get my results, I spoke with other moms who were also going through the uncertainty of

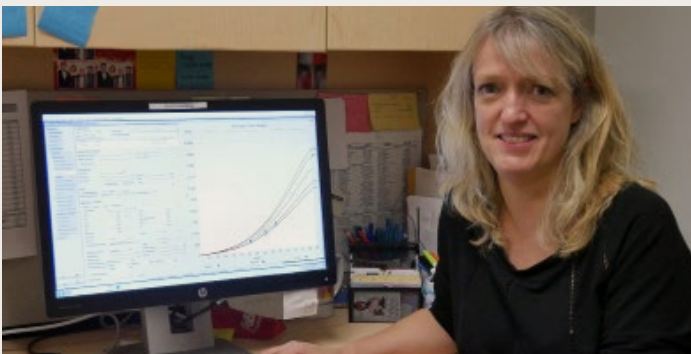


prenatal testing. The importance of early detection and being able to get as much accurate information as possible is crucial to help reduce the expecting mother's anxiety.

Being pregnant is truly a miracle, and every woman deserves to be able to enjoy the journey without the added worry of medical uncertainty. By identifying potential risks as soon as they arise, new research and technologies such as early-pregnancy ultrasounds will lead to healthier, happier mothers and families.

Thanks to generous donor support, LHSC has begun acquiring new ultrasound equipment and software, and pursuing novel research supporting Maternal Newborn Care, described over the next few pages. ■

Donor-Funded Software Improves Care



Dr. Barbra de Vrijer shows how Astraia charts the growth of triplets

Pregnancies can be considered high risk for many reasons: pregnancy losses, multiples such as twins and triplets, or other factors such as mothers with heart anomalies, illnesses or injuries that could affect the baby's development.

Our hospital installed ultrasound software called Astraia in February that is tailored to high-risk pregnancies. It integrates with the hospital's ultrasound machines to provide a complete history and timeline of a baby's development. Physicians would previously write out or dictate a patient's ultrasound results in their medical charts, which is time-consuming and subject to error. Astraia automatically populates that data into instant visuals of growth to provide critical information for the obstetrician and the patient.

Dr. Barbra de Vrijer will now be analyzing Astraia's database to support her research into how patients' physical anatomy affects their ultrasound results, with the goal of customizing prenatal care depending on a woman's body type.

Thank you to the donors who helped fund this software that's helping the women's care team provide better and more accurate care to expecting mothers. ■

First-Ever Legacy Gift to Women's Care Funds Much-Needed Ultrasound Equipment

Legacy gifts make a profound impact at our hospital. Fundraising priorities such as women's care are now benefitting from these meaningful gifts, with the program recently receiving its first estate gift from the late Mary Anne Stapleton. Her stepson J. Jeffrey Stapleton shares her empowering story:

“The idea for Mary's gift to the Women's Program stemmed from two life experiences:

Most recently, there was the exceptional care provided to her by LHSC on several occasions during her later years – care which greatly improved her quality of life. Mary had always been ardent about women's health care issues and she wanted to leave a gift to help with patient care, hospital equipment and research.

Equally important to her, Mary hoped to inspire women to achieve. As a self-made businesswoman, Mary enjoyed professional success during a time when a woman rising to senior executive levels in Canada was virtually unheard of. Through hard work, singular determination, and her strong aptitude for leadership, Mary rose through the ranks, from junior secretary to her eventual appointment as the first woman Director of Human Resources at the CIBC head office in Toronto. She broke through the 'glass ceiling', becoming the only woman on the bank's senior executive at the time.

Mary carried the same passion for women's rights and career opportunities in all areas throughout the rest of her life. That passion led her to bequeath a significant portion of her estate to LHSC.”

Mary's generous donation will fund two much-needed ultrasound machines as LHSC's current ultrasound equipment is sorely outdated.



Mary Anne Stapleton at London Health Sciences Foundation's *Donors for Tomorrow* luncheon in 2008

Our hospital's goal is to create 10 new ultrasound rooms equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and wall-mounted imaging screens, giving families an unforgettable experience when viewing their baby for the first time – an experience they can relive again and again with a take-home recording.

The new machines Mary's gift supports will not only provide extensive information about a baby's health and growth – as early as the first trimester – but will also be used to detect gynecologic disorders and cancers.

Mary's inspiring legacy is kick-starting LHSC's transition to better equipment that is improving care for women and families. ■

World-Class Women's Care in our Region

By the numbers



5,648 births



85,000 patients seen in Women's Ambulatory Care



LOWEST C-section rate across Canada



10% - pregnancies considered high risk



5 high-risk obstetricians

Recent Advances in Women's Care

- 2011** • Grace Donnelly Women's Health Pavilion opens at Victoria Hospital
- 2012** • New nationally recognized triage method developed by LHSC's Dr. Rob Gratton improves obstetrical care
- 2013** • LHSC begins using the Da Vinci Robotic System for minimally invasive gynecologic surgeries
- 2016** • New Continence Care Clinic opens and reduces wait times
- 2017** • Women's Care Simulation Education Centre Opens
- 2018** • Astraia software implemented for high-risk pregnancies

By the numbers statistics based upon data for the period of April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018 at LHSC

Shirley Valentine Steals Hearts for our Hospital



Nora McClellan as Shirley Valentine. Photo courtesy of Diane O'Dell.

Top-notch acting, delicious hors d'oeuvres and plenty of laughs – all to raise money for women's care at LHSC. This was the Victoria Playhouse Petrolia's (VPP) production of *Shirley Valentine*.

The special performance of the one-woman show featuring famed Canadian actress Nora McClellan raised \$21,500 for the Women's Care program at LHSC, which will fund a new simulation mannequin in the Michael Gunning Simulation Centre. Nora was thrilled to be a part of this night for LHSC, saying "I have to contribute to this" when asked about participating in the fundraiser. Thank you to the committee, guests, sponsors and everyone who supported the third year of this event in support of women's care. ■



Committee Chair and Women's Care Campaign Cabinet Member Beth Traynor with Co-Artistic Directors of the VPP, David Rogers (left) and David Hogan

Date Night After Surgery - Lenore's Story

In the past seven years, Lenore Rawlings has been through one life-threatening health scare after the other.

In 2011, she and her husband George pulled over near their home in McGregor when a pickup truck struck them. Lenore suffered a blood clot in her lung, which left her in a coma and clinging to life in intensive care. With Lenore coming close to death several times, doctors in Windsor performed six tracheotomies to open her airway. She tenaciously pulled through each trauma, spending four months in the hospital before she was referred to LHSC, where surgeons removed scar tissue from her vocal cords and esophagus so she could speak again.

After enduring such trauma, Lenore was incredibly grateful to be moving on with her life when another shock hit. She began experiencing post-menopausal spotting and bleeding. A biopsy revealed pre-cancerous cells, which meant her uterus and other reproductive organs had to be removed.

Her doctors referred her to LHSC for a hysterectomy because she was considered high-risk due to her previous surgeries. Within a month, she had an appointment with LHSC obstetrician/gynecologist Dr. Robert Di Cecco. Much to Lenore's relief, Dr. Di Cecco informed her she was a candidate for the less-invasive robotic surgery.



LHSC OB/Gyn Dr. Robert Di Cecco

Lenore and George arrived in London in May 2017 for the surgery. Given Lenore's previous traumas, they steered themselves for any unforeseen complications. Lenore went in for the surgery at 8 a.m. and, to her amazement, was



Lenore Rawlings

discharged by 6 p.m. Though she was nervous to be leaving the safety of her care team, Lenore wasn't in pain and trusted their decision to send her home.

"Dr. Di Cecco, the nurses and the porters and everyone were just so fantastic," she said.

The next day, she was delighted to discover she still wasn't in any pain. She had assumed she'd be bed-ridden, but she felt well enough to go out for dinner the next night with George – turning what she thought would be a painful and fraught time into an unexpected date night.

Except for experiencing withdrawal symptoms from the anaesthetic, Lenore described her recovery as "easy peasy". The best was yet to come. Lenore will never forget her follow-up appointment later that month with Dr. Di Cecco.

"As soon as he walked into the room, he said 'Well, the first thing I'm going to tell you is that you don't have cancer. We got it out before it set in.'"

Lenore was finally able to go back to enjoying her life – going for walks, cooking, spending quality time with her husband and family, and enjoying plenty of laughs with her new friends in aqua therapy. Her hysterectomy quickly became a distant memory thanks to the speedy healing of the five tiny incisions.

"When you figure out the savings on the recovery costs, plus just the mental attitude that I could be home instead of having to stay in the hospital, that itself is priceless."

-Lenore Rawlings ■

Donors Help Continence Care Clinic Grow



Nurse Continence Advisor Martha Gleason with the biofeedback machine

Since opening in November 2016 thanks to a generous gift from Shoppers Drug Mart, LHSC's Continence Clinic has served more than 150 patients and has now become a permanent service. The demand for the clinic has been so great that LHSC is in the process of adding a second nurse continence advisor, Rebecca Sheriff, and another half-day per week to the clinic's current schedule.

The purpose of the nurse-led clinic is to fill the gap in service for patients who would otherwise be facing a lengthy wait to see a urogynecologist. Many patients benefit from biofeedback, which works like physiotherapy for the muscles of the pelvic floor.

The nurse continence advisor guides the patient through the use of a biofeedback machine, which displays a visual



Nurse Continence Advisor
Rebecca Sheriff



Last year's Stop the Leak event featured a fashion show, signature cocktails and fabulous live and silent auctions – raising more than \$45,000 for the Continence Care Clinic. Get your tickets early for this year's event on October 14 at lhsf.ca/stoptheleak

showing the patient if she is using her pelvic muscles correctly during kegel exercises.

"I was reading how to do kegel exercises and practising them but it didn't seem to help if I had a sudden urge," said Fran, a recent patient. "I came to find out at the Continence Clinic that I really wasn't doing them correctly. That was my biggest 'ah ha' moment. The way Martha [Gleason] describes how to do it, and then doing it that way while watching the screen, it really works. Now I'm able to take what I learned at the clinic and take control of my situation."

Donor support will continue to help the clinic expand through private donations and events. Thank you for bringing this life-changing program to London. ■

By the numbers

December 2016 to April 2018

150 Number of patients seen at the Continence Clinic

32 Additional patients referred for biofeedback by LHSC urogynecologists

6 Average number of biofeedback sessions

13 Percent of quality of life improvement in first 3 months *

*according to patient surveys

Learning Critical Skills in Emergency Situations



Matthew Krawecki, Technical Consultant, Michael Gunning Simulation Centre, and Deborah Wiseman, Director, Women's Care

The donor-funded Michael Gunning Simulation Centre has been open for just over a year now and is already proving to be a highly effective training centre in our hospital. Within the space, residents, nurses and specialists from various disciplines work together as if in a live clinical setting, while communicating with the care team, patient and the family.

Women's Care Simulation Lead Dr. Cynthia Chan and Technical Consultant Matthew Krawecki ensure that the

experience is as authentic as possible. The adult mannequins are realistic, high-fidelity models: you can feel for a pulse, insert a catheter, deliver a baby, check the pupils for dilation, listen to the heart and lungs, intubate, see cervical dilation and more. When the care team asks questions to the patient mannequin, the mannequin can provide life-like responses courtesy of a built-in speaker that relays the voice of someone speaking into a microphone in the control room.

Dr. Chan says the training has highlighted major areas where communication can be improved during emergency scenarios, improvements that are already being transferred to patient care. The Centre is also helping the next generation of OB-GYNs hone their skills in a safe space.

Top Four Simulation Benefits

- 1 Practice and refine medical skills
- 2 Learn proper emergency communication with colleagues
- 3 Experience collaborating with various clinical disciplines
- 4 Learn how to effectively and clearly communicate with patients and families

According to Dr. Cynthia Chan

"Starting out residency as a physician can be overwhelming. Having the opportunity to run through high-risk scenarios in a simulated, non-judgmental environment has helped me face them more confidently in real life." -Pallavi Sriram, Resident Physician

The Simulation Centre was funded by generous donations from TD, the Gunning Estate and McKenzie Lake Lawyers. ■

World-Class Research Supported by Donors

The Allen-Carey Scholarship is awarded to a Canadian physician whose research is contributing to excellence in women's care. It honours women's care advocates Dr. Hugh Allen and the late Dr. Lewis Carey.

Dr. Jennifer Yamamoto, a recipient for the 2017 award, explains how the award propelled her research forward in pregnancy and diabetes:

"Diabetes affects one-in-six pregnancies and continues to be associated with an increase in congenital anomalies and stillbirth," she says. "The Allen-Carey award has enabled me to lay the foundation for my career as a clinician-researcher focused on improving outcomes of women with diabetes."

MEET OUR 2018 AWARD RECIPIENT

Dr. Steven Bisch



Dr. Steven Bisch is pursuing a Master of Public Health degree at Harvard University as well as a Fellowship in Gynecologic Oncology at the University of Calgary with a focus in bioinformatics, which are methods and software tools for understanding medical data.

"From improving enrolment in life-saving clinical trials to detailed analysis of tumour genomics," he says, "bioinformatics is a field that is fast becoming critical to research and clinical care in the practice of gynecologic oncology."

The funding will help Dr. Bisch with his long-term goal of developing a bioinformatics research group and national gynecologic oncology research database. ■

By the numbers

12 Allen-Carey award winners since the scholarship was established

\$332,565

Awarded in scholarships

Thank you!

Seven years ago, we set an ambitious and unprecedented goal to raise \$200 million for LHSC. The response from our communities was overwhelming – \$215 million raised for our hospital!



Watch the video at lhsf.ca/thankyou

We'd Be Happy to Hear from You

Please contact us if you have any questions about the Women's Care program or to learn more about how philanthropic support is helping to create world-class women's care right here in London.



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