Hope takes flight

Hope has certainly taken flight at Sunnybrook, thanks to patients and their families, donors and the surrounding community.

As part of Sunnybrook Foundation’s Hope Takes Flight campaign, some 11,000 origami cranes – carefully folded and thoughtfully inscribed with messages of hope – hang from wires just inside M-wing’s main entrance. The campaign raised $83,708, and was inspired by Japanese tradition that says those who fold 1,000 origami cranes will be granted a wish, be it for health, peace or good luck.

Messages inscribed in the cranes include get-well sentiments, memorials to loved ones, and words of encouragement. The cranes are expected to inspire patients and their families, as well as the staff and visitors that pass by the display.

Cancer survivor says thank you with five-year celebration

“At Sunnybrook, we are certain that our mission is to continuously improve the lives of patients, whether it be physically or emotionally,” says Abid Malik.

Abid Malik’s five-year party was a celebration of many things.

Held on May 12 at Originals restaurant on Bayview Avenue, the party marked just over five years since Abid’s last treatments at the Odette Cancer Centre. It also marked his 47th birthday.

And as his wife, Kelly Gorman, notes, it also marked the five years the couple has been able to watch their daughter, Nyla, grow and enter kindergarten, to welcome six nieces and nephews, and to create lasting memories with family and friends.

“It was amazing. We had a lot of friends and family there,” Abid says. The event raised money for research into blood cancers at the Odette Cancer Centre through the Joseph Michael Pigott Fellowship in Hematology. Abid and Kelly have blown past their $5,000 goal, having raised an impressive $7,825 for the fellowship as of May 22.

“We know how important research is,” Kelly says.

Abid began his battle with lymphoma and thyroid cancer in late 2006. He was treated for his more rare form of T-cell lymphoma at Sunnybrook. His treatments finished in March 2007 and he has since been declared cancer-free.

Abid and Kelly say they’re thankful to all the Sunnybrook nurses and doctors who offered such compassionate and knowledgeable care. “I was getting world-class care,” says Abid.

Don’t Bother

Sunnybrook is unveiling two stroke-related initiatives to coincide with June’s Stroke Month.

To fit with Sunnybrook’s theme this year, “Sunnybrook’s Stroke Unit: Leading Innovation and Interprofessional Care,” the hospital’s new 16-bed stroke unit opened June 5. This will mark a significant change in how stroke care is delivered at Sunnybrook.

“Hospitals with stroke units provide specialized care that improves patient outcomes,” says Beth Linkewich, regional director of the North & East GTA Stroke Network at Sunnybrook. “Patients will now have access seven days a week to an interprofessional team that includes nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists and social workers, with a focus on earlier integration of rehabilitation into care.”

Having this enhanced access to care can shorten hospital stays for stroke patients, and improve their chances of making a meaningful recovery upon discharge.

Cocking with the opening, and to support system-wide changes in stroke care in Toronto, the launch of the Toronto Stroke Network’s Virtual Community of Practice (VCoP) is geared toward bringing together those working again stroke patients across the GTA to share knowledge and resources.

“The VCoP is an interactive forum that brings together health-care professionals, researchers, students – anyone working in stroke,” says Joanne Fortin, regional education coordinator of the North & East GTA Stroke Network. The launches set the stage for system-wide changes in access and delivery of stroke care in Ontario, and have established Sunnybrook as a leader in implementing best practices.

“People from other hospitals across Ontario are interested in how we’ve accomplished seven days a week rehab on the stroke unit,” says Linkewich.

Sybil Edmondson

Sunnybrook marks stroke month with new unit

Federal government pumps $6.91M into Sunnybrook research project

The federal government has thrown its support behind Sunnybrook Research Institute’s efforts to fight cancer and heart disease with a pledge of $6.91 million.

The funding will see SRI lead a partnership of 19 industry partners and Western University, and is hoped to accelerate the commercialization of four new image-guided therapy systems. Currently used to diagnose health problems, the systems will be redesigned to be used in minimally invasive procedures, reducing the need for hospital stays and cutting recovery times.

“Sunnybrook Research Institute is a world leader in the field of image-guided therapeutics research, and in commercializing its discoveries,” says Dr. Barry McLellan, Sunnybrook’s president and CEO. “This investment will accelerate our capacity to invent game-changing medical imaging technologies, and move them rapidly into the market, for application in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, heart disease, stroke and other complex health conditions.”

The project will also provide valuable laboratory space and access to image-guided therapy companies in southern Ontario, which is expected to stimulate new product research and development and market opportunities. The support is expected to lead to high-value jobs and boost economic growth across southern Ontario.

“Our contribution will support Sunnybrook Research Institute’s efforts to develop new technologies that will increase the competitiveness of the medical imaging industry in Canada, help diversify our economy, and create high-value jobs,” says John Carmichael, MP for Don Valley West, who made the funding announcement on behalf of the Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario).

“Cranes are very peaceful and lovely – and I believe that when you make the cranes, those thoughts come true,” says Cora Cuyegkeng, a Sunnybrook staff member who participated in the campaign by folding cranes.

Three nine-year-old students at Crescent School, Aidan Maunten, Justin Yeo and Evan Bibtton, were among those who participated, donating $127 and 150 origami birds to the cause.

Michael McKinnon

The community has invested $546 million in Sunnybrook as of April 30, 2012.

Learn how the Campaign for Sunnybrook is saving lives at sunnybrook.ca/foundation

To donate, visit sunnybrook.ca/champion or call 416-480-4483.

CHAMPIONS of Care

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Sunnybrook’s stroke team

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Sound waves destroy tumours

A procedure developed at Sunnybrook may result in quick and minimally invasive treatments for men with localized prostate cancer. Early preclinical and clinical tests suggest the procedure shows promise for faster recovery times, and could minimize side-effects such as urinary, bowel and erectile dysfunction often associated with more radical radiation and surgical treatment options.

“The procedure is quick. It’s precise. There’s no incision,” says Dr. Laurence Klotz, a surgical oncologist with the Genitourinary Cancer Care team at Sunnybrook’s Odette Cancer Centre. “We hope it will preserve quality of life.”

MRI-controlled transurethral ultrasound therapy uses magnetic resonance imaging to guide and control high-intensity ultrasound energy. During the procedure, which lasts about 30 minutes, heat produced by ultrasound energy destroys the targeted tissue within the prostate and the MR-temperature monitoring enables control and adjustment as the treatment is being delivered.

“It’s like destroying cancerous prostate tissue with a thermal scalpel, while saving surrounding tissue and critical structures,” says Dr. Klotz.

The system was developed by Drs. Michael Bronskill and Rajiv Chopra, scientists in the Physical Sciences platform at Sunnybrook Research Institute, with collaboration from Dr. Klotz. The technology has been licensed to Profound Medical Inc.

Dr. Klotz is now leading a Phase I clinical trial with Dr. Chopra, Sunnybrook pathologist Dr. Linda Sugar, and Dr. Massoom Haider, associate scientist in the Physical Sciences platform at Sunnybrook Research Institute. The team received a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Funding has also come from the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, the National Cancer Institute, the Terry Fox Foundation and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Exercise can reduce inflammation in heart disease patients

A new study by Sunnybrook researchers adds weight to the recommendation that exercise is key to recovery for heart disease patients.

Patients with coronary artery disease who exercised showed a significant reduction in blood levels of CRP and fibrinogen, two markers of inflammation associated with a higher risk of heart disease and recurrent coronary events.

“These results strengthen the evidence that exercise can lead to reduced inflammation,” says lead author Dr. Walter Swardfager, a post-doctoral fellow in the Neuropsychopharmacology Research Group at Sunnybrook.

The study, featured in the latest edition of the American Heart Journal, is a meta-analysis of 25 studies involving 1,466 patients.

“The positive effects of exercise may be especially pronounced in coronary artery disease patients because they can have higher levels of inflammation before starting an exercise regime,” says Dr. Krista Latchitt, a senior scientist with the Brain Sciences Program at Sunnybrook Research Institute.

Although the meta-analysis did not reveal what specifically reduces levels of inflammation, patients with less favourable lipid profiles seemed to benefit more, and lipid profiles were significantly improved after exercise.

Dr. Swardfager, now supported by a Post-Doctoral Fellowship from the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, hopes these findings will emphasize to patients how important exercise is for those living with heart disease.

“Exercise can be used in combination with medications to get even more benefit from treatment. Structured exercise is also a key component of cardiac rehabilitation, which is known to reduce the risk of mortality for patients with coronary artery disease,” says Dr. Swardfager.

Unique clinic supports patients living with carcinoid tumours

There’s got to be something more that can be done.

That hope sustained Maureen Weiss through diagnosis and treatment for a cancer hard to diagnose, little understood and best treated with a collaborative armament of expertise.

In 2009, she was diagnosed with carcinoid syndrome, a group of symptoms caused by carcinoid tumours known as neuroendocrine tumours that develop in the gastrointestinal tract. Messages go awry in the neuroendocrine system linked to the body’s nervous system and endocrine system. Individuals experience flushing or severe blushing in the face and other areas, night sweats, diarrhea and heart palpitations.

Flushing in older women may be mistakenly linked to menopause and diarrhea to Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

“Neuroendocrine tumours are a varied group of malignancies with different shapes and structures, functions and behaviours, which means treatment requires tight collaborations across modalities. Though a less common cancer, we’re unfortunately seen a five-fold incidence increase,” says Dr. Calvin Law, lead for the, Neurendocrine Tumours (NETs) Clinic at Sunnybrook’s Odette Cancer Centre where patients are simultaneously seen by Dr. Law, a surgical oncologist, Dr. Simon Singh, a medical oncologist, a specialized oncology nurse, interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary treatment plans are considered and discussed.

Maureen had had two gall bladder attacks and underwent gallstone surgery after a third. In follow-up, the ultrasound showed lesions on her liver. At the time, she experienced flushing and night sweats and had chalked the symptoms up to menopause. “In kind sight,” she says, “the gallstones were related to carcinoid cancer.”

She underwent chemotherapy with Dr. Mary Tweeddale, a York Central Hospital oncologist, who then referred her to the NETs Clinic.

Maureen had complex liver surgery performed by Dr. Law, and was strong enough to receive a liver embolization, which stops blood flow to the tumours, by an interventional radiologist, Dr. Singh provided hormonal therapy before and after surgery.

Maureen feels better than ever. “Her hormone levels are almost 80 times lower,” says Dr. Law. “The chemicals the tumours were producing had dissipated, which explains her great improvement and a great victory”

“I am one of the lucky ones,” says Maureen, who recently turned 65 and is enjoying her golden years.

Balsamic chicken with roasted tomatoes

This recipe has been approved by a Sunnybrook dietician for more information on healthy eating, visit our Clinical Nutrition pages.

Ingredients:
• 1 pint grape tomatoes
• 1 tablespoon honey
• 1/2 teaspoons olive oil
• 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
• 4 (6-ounce) skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
• 1/2 teaspoons fresh ground black pepper
• Cooking spray
• Balsamic vinaigrette salad spritzer (such as Wish-Bone)

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Combine first three ingredients in a small bowl; place tomato mixture on a foil-lined jelly-roll pan.
3. Bake at 450° for 12 minutes or until tomato skins burst and begin to wrinkle, stirring once.
4. Transfer tomatoes to a bowl, scraping juices into bowl. Stir 1/4 teaspoon salt into tomato mixture.
5. Place each chicken breast half between two sheets of heavy-duty plastic wrap; pound to 1/4-inch thickness using a meat mallet or two sheets of heavy-duty plastic wrap.
6. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add chicken; cook three to four minutes on each side.
7. Place chicken on individual plates; coat each breast half with two to three sprays of balsamic spritzer.
8. Spoon tomatoes evenly over chicken.

What do house fires cost the health-care system?

A new Sunnybrook-led study aims to answer the burning question.

The study was launched in early May with a controlled burn demo at the Toronto Fire Service Special Operations Centre. The demo illustrated the difference between having an automated sprinkler installed in a home versus not having one when a fire breaks out.

“We know every year fires kills 400 people in Canada, and the majority of these deaths occur in the home,” says Joanne Barfield, lead researcher for the study and manager of Trauma Injury Prevention at Sunnybrook.

The purpose of our study is to look at the costs of burn care to the health-care system and whether automated sprinklers in residential homes have an impact on the health, safety and economic outcomes of house fires in Canada.”

Over the next three years, researchers will examine literature and up-to-date statistics regarding fires and their associated costs to homeowners, insurance companies, fire services and society as a whole. The research will focus on Canada, but will include other parts of the world to find best practices.