Children's HEALTH FOUNDATION

2024-2025 YEAR IN REVIEW
childhealth.ca

celebrations!

Unraveling the Mysteries of Rare Disease

1 in 12 Canadians are affected

Gabrielle, 2
Brittle Bone Disease

New Children's Hospital VP Shares Her Vision

Better, Faster Care

Donors Fuel Sizeable ED Expansion

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Letter *from the* CEO & Board Chair

Scott Fortnum,
President & CEO,
Children's Health Foundation

Farah Rohoman,
Chair, Board of Directors
Children's Health Foundation

Hope isn't a wish. It's created every day.

It lives in the steady, caring hands of professionals at Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC) and TVCC.

It lives in the bright minds of our researchers at Children's Health Research Institute, the unwavering determination of patients and their families, and in the hearts of our Children's Health Foundation supporters.

Together, we make miracles possible. We turn obstacles into opportunities, discoveries into cures, and despair into optimism.

In this issue of ***celebrations!***, we highlight the positive impact of working together in harmony to advance paediatric care.

Philanthropy creates a spark that ignites powerful transformation. We celebrate your role as a catalyst in shaping better, faster care.

With a growing population and rising health care needs, now is a pivotal time for change.

Children's Health Foundation donors are helping to revolutionize health care delivery, elevate medical education and enhance the pursuit of groundbreaking research.

With your support, Children's Hospital's has an ever-growing reputation for excellence and attracts top candidates. We are thrilled to be able to introduce you to a handful of new stellar recruits in our Bright Minds, Caring Hands insert.

Every day, our health care professionals go beyond to save lives. Your generosity helps make it all possible.

Thank you for ensuring that every child in our region has the best opportunity for a vibrant future.

With your help, Hope Lives.

Updates from Children's

THE ATRIUM · THE ATRIUM

Donors Fuel Sizeable ED Expansion

Children's Hospital proudly unveiled an expanded emergency department (ED) in December, a project made possible through the generous contributions of $3 million from donors.

The 50% increase in footprint is allowing medical teams to provide better care and faster. As one of Ontario's few dedicated paediatric EDs, the department has faced increasing pressures stemming from a growing population and challenges within the medical system, including family doctor shortages. Over the past four years, patient visits to the ED have increased by a staggering 26%.

Local business owner, Clarence Covey and his family were the first to act on the issue – donating $500,000 to lead the expansion initiative.

"As the 'front door' of Children's, our ED is a lifeline for our community. The Covey Family's extraordinary gift stands as a beacon of hope and transformation.

We are incredibly grateful," said Scott Fortnum, President & CEO of Children's Health Foundation. "However, this achievement was not theirs alone; compassionate individuals contributed monthly, made donations at their local stores, or utilized various other channels to make this a reality. This expansion serves as a powerful reminder that every dollar truly makes a difference."

A bright and welcoming space, the enhanced ED features eight additional beds and two dedicated procedure rooms.

"We're really proud of this new space that has allowed us to reduce wait times and provide enhanced safety and comfort," said Dr. Rod Lim, Director of Paediatric Emergency. "To our donors, I want to say thank you."

Dr. Craig Campbell Appointed Chair in Paediatrics Research

Dr. Craig Campbell has been honoured as the inaugural Children's Health Foundation Chair in Paediatrics Research. This prestigious position is dedicated to building strategic research capacity to fuel innovative discoveries in child health.

Dr. Campbell is the Department Head for Children's Hospital and Chair, Paediatrics, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry. The new Chair position was made possible by a $1.5-million donation from Children's Health Foundation and matched by Western University.

After careful consideration of more than 40 well-accomplished applicants, Dr. Campbell deployed the Chair funding to recruit an award-winning epidemiologist and health services researcher, Dr. Ellen Kuenzig. With previous appointments at The Hospital for Sick Children and SickKids Research Institute, Dr. Kuenzig is passionate about positively impacting the lives of children with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

Dr. Campbell envisions Dr. Kuenzig working closely with Dr. Eileen Crowley, a paediatric gastroenterologist and clinician researcher, who won the 2024 Crohn's and Colitis Canada Rising Star Award.


Dr. Craig Campbell

"The most impactful collaboration for improving child health happens when a leading clinician researcher collaborates with a top scientist," said Dr. Campbell. "With Children's Health Foundation's support, I'm thrilled to bring these two bright minds together."

THE ATRIUM • THE ATRIUM

Charting New Paths: Supercharging Precision Medicine

A well-known philanthropic family is fueling a revolution in paediatric cancer care for our region through a powerful investment in precision medicine research.

After donating a historic $20 million to transform adult cancer care at London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC), the Verspeeten Family surprised Children's Health Foundation with a $675,000 donation.

Much of the gift will support the joint research of Dr. Richard Kim, a world-renowned precision medicine researcher and Chair, Division of Clinical Pharmacology, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, and Dr. Alexandra Zorzi, Division Head of Children's Hospital's Childhood Cancer Program. In 2024, Dr. Kim was named Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, one of the highest honours attainable by Canadian scholars.

Precision medicine tailors treatment to the individual characteristics of each patient, ensuring they receive the right dose of the right medicine at the right time for them.

Banishing the one-size-fits-all approach, Drs. Kim and Zorzi's work is improving quality of life and health outcomes for young oncology patients.

The Verspeeten Family's generosity came on the heels of a historic gift to Children's Health Foundation from the Jahnke Family. Dieter and Lyse Jahnke announced $5 million to establish the Jahnke Family Paediatric Oncology Centre of Excellence, with Lyse saying, "We've started, and we hope others will follow."

Dr. Richard Kim (right) and his lab team

Jane Erdman Fund Continues Trailblazing Midwife's Legacy

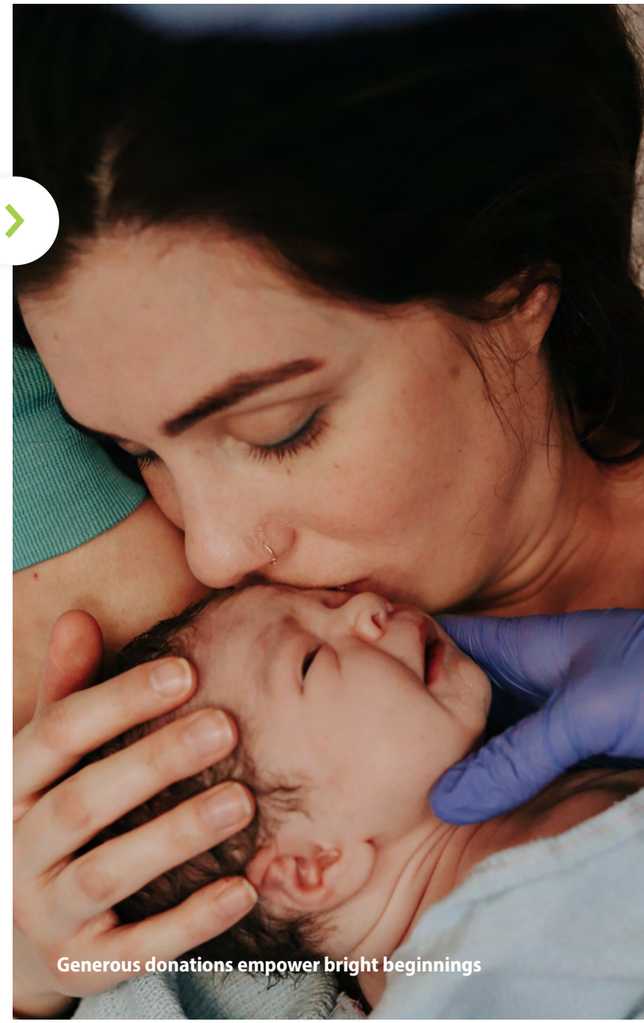
Jane Erdman was a true champion of midwifery care in London, growing the profession across the city and supporting women's choice in reproductive care.

Jane passed away on October 10, 2024. The recently launched fund in her name, held by Children's Health Foundation, honours and continues the important work that Jane undertook throughout her career.

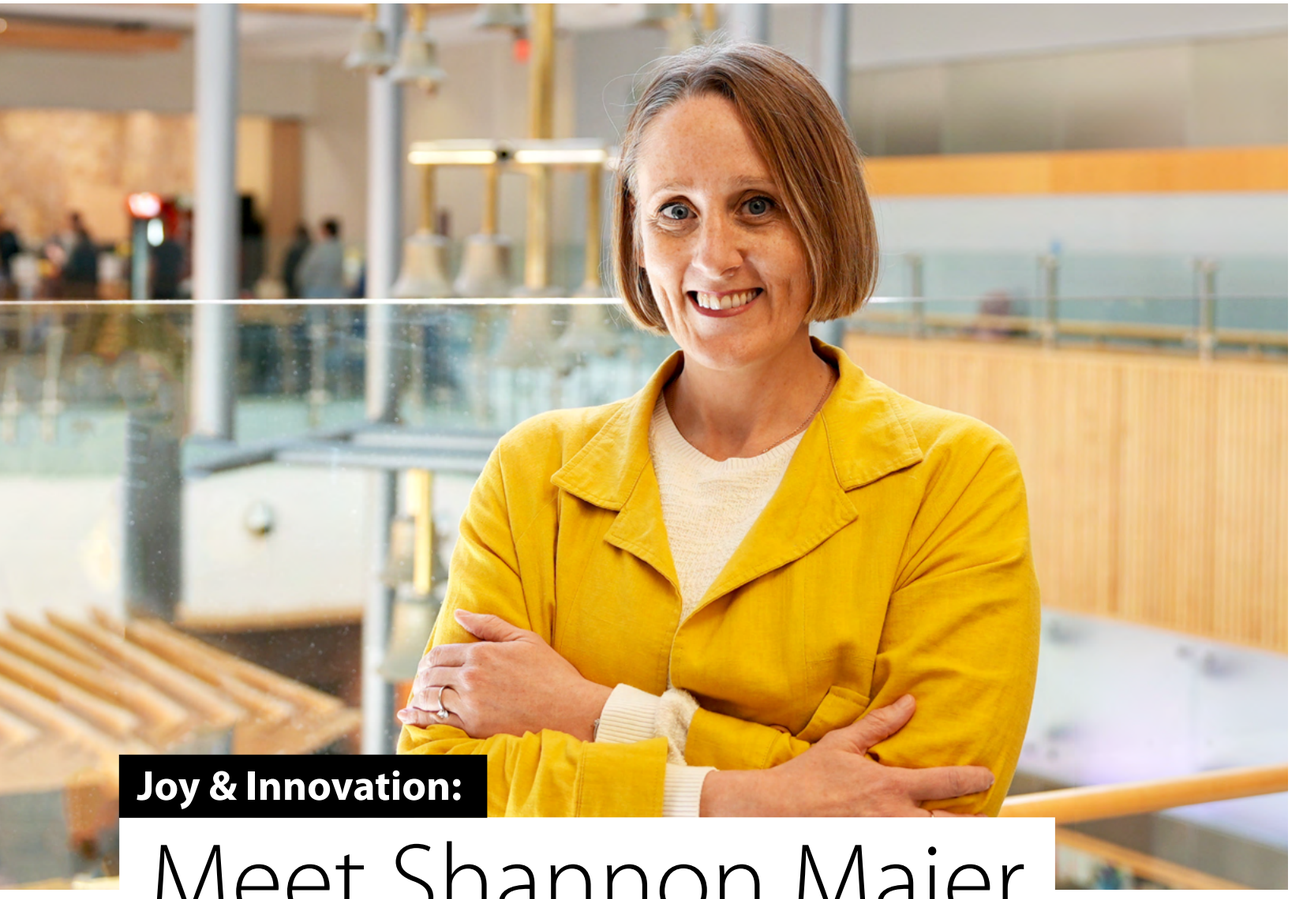
A midwife of 23 years and a former partner at one of London's oldest midwifery clinics, Jane cared for hundreds of families while guiding their precious babies into the world. She was also valued as a leader and mentor.

Donations to the Jane Erdman Fund will support the Department of Midwifery at LHSC. One of the largest in Ontario, the department has caught the attention of health professionals across Canada for its novel leadership structure and recent game-changing initiatives that transform care for new and growing families.

"Midwifery care offers significant advantages, and by wholeheartedly supporting and promoting it as a valuable resource, we can enhance the quality of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care for our region," said Elana Johnson, founder of Womancare Midwives (now Forest City Midwifery C.A.R.E.), where Jane was a partner. "In Jane's name, donations will ensure our children enjoy the best possible start with the healthiest possible parents."



Generous donations empower bright beginnings



Joy & Innovation:

Meet Shannon Maier

Children's Hospital's new VP

Shannon Maier is the new Vice President of Children's Hospital and London Health Sciences Centre's Women's Program. With 24 years of clinical and leadership experience, she is recognized for her innovative problem-solving abilities, her impactful leadership during times of change, and her dedication to enhancing quality improvement.

What is your favourite children's book?

Mr. Pine's Purple House, a book about a man who in a quest to be unique, inspires his neighbours to also embrace their own diverse interests.

Would you rather fly or breathe underwater?

I grew up on a farm and we had a pool that I would endlessly swim in. I really wanted to be a mermaid and breathe underwater.

What drew you to Children's Hospital and London Health Sciences Centre? What impact do you hope to achieve?

What drew me to Children's Hospital and LHSC is the organization's reputation for clinical excellence and lots of firsts in research and care delivery. As well, I believe strongly that providing proactive, preventative and incredible care to women and children is key to a healthier community. As one of only four paediatric hospitals in Ontario, Children's Hospital is essential in supporting this mission and I'm thrilled to be part of shaping a brighter future. My goal is to highlight the great work that's already happening while ensuring our team's ongoing ability to innovate, research and grow in the face of rising health care needs and an expanding population in Southwestern Ontario.

You are a registered nurse by training. As you've moved into leadership, have you continued to draw on that frontline experience?

I absolutely have. I became a nurse because I wanted to look after people. My mom was a nurse, my daughter is in training to be a nurse, and my son is studying health sciences. It seems to be a calling in our family, and I view leadership as an extension of my 12 years of frontline experience. Starting where I did, I feel it's vital to foster joy in work. I use this language carefully, not to negate the challenges our health care professionals have faced and continue to encounter, but to honour their right to a joyful experience. There is lots of evidence showing that patient experiences and care outcomes are better when teams are joyful and connected to their common purpose and engaged in improvement work. Equally important is approaching problems from a place of love and kindness.

In the first few months of your role, what have you learned from meeting with staff, patients and families?

I have learned a lot about what's worrying people: space, staff safety, financial stability and the ability to provide the kind of care they are dedicated to. At the same time, I've also heard from patients about their amazing experiences and how care at LHSC has changed their lives. There is tremendous team spirit and passion among staff. The clinical care here is world class. There is also so much gratitude from and for the community. Health professionals are very appreciative of the generosity of Children's Health Foundation donors. It's neat to see point of care staff who feel this connected to supporters.

What do you think are the top issues facing paediatric health care and what opportunities for advancement are you most excited about?

It is a big issue in this country that the health of our children is worsening. We are seeing increasing numbers of complex and chronic disease, including rare diseases, in children. A skyrocketing cost of living, housing instability, social media usage and the pandemic aftershocks are also affecting families. Focusing on children's wellbeing is essential for achieving equitable health.

I'm thrilled about how Children's Hospital is collaborating with peer institutions and community partners to drive key improvements. We are focused on further unlocking the abilities and talents of our providers. We are also exploring exciting innovations and advancements, including new technology. I'm interested in how we will leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to impact the care of children. Stable operations continue to be a priority, as well as increasing community trust. Finally, we are committed to maintaining great government relations. There has been an increase in investment in children's health recently through hospital care and we have seen the benefit of that in measurable ways.

Better, Quicker & More Responsive

Mental health care redesign results in dramatic reduction in wait times, improved care

Rachel Van Allen (left) and Nicole Sibo pictured with glitter jars, a tool to support mindfulness

Even as the pandemic fades from our immediate memory, its impacts have continued to reverberate.

Child and youth mental health in Canada has been pushed to a breaking point. Wait lists ballooning. Young people growing sicker.

Amid great challenge, Children's Hospital's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Care Program charted a transformational path forward.

Emboldened by the generosity of Children's Health Foundation donors, the staff reinvented how they deliver outpatient care – and reduced their wait list by more than 75% and counting.

"We completely reimagined our program model," said Nicole Sibo, a registered nurse who was brought on as part of this work. "We have changed to a more integrated approach and it's working."

The team pivoted from a siloed approach. Patients are now guided from intake straight into the appropriate treatment stream. Psychiatrists and clinicians work collaboratively to co-create with caregivers and patients a tailored and supportive care plan.

"Before you had to wait for an assessment with a psychiatrist and then wait again for treatment," said Sibo. "That's not happening anymore."

New group therapy offerings have also helped in providing more timely care. Group therapy has been shown to be equally effective, but more efficient compared with individual therapy.

Rachel Van Allen is a registered nurse who supports the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) stream, which provides care for patients experiencing emotional dysregulation concerns or borderline personality traits. She said she's proud of the innovation and creativity she's witnessed and been part of.

"We've increased and varied our programming so people can find care that is helpful for them," said Van Allen. "You don't have to fit yourself into a mold. We have programming that is going to suit your specific needs, because everyone's unique."

Underscoring their commitment to providing tailored care, Van Allen and Sibo are excited to pilot a new initiative: the Wellness Rapid Access Program (WRAP).

WRAP will be beneficial for patients who don't align with one of the three main treatment streams of mood and anxiety, trauma or DBT but would still benefit from an acute care hospital intervention.

WRAP may also be utilized to support enhanced patient engagement, transitional care or post-discharge intervention.

"This will be for young people who need a shorter duration of treatment and one that's more generalized," explained Van Allen. "As a flexible delivery model, WRAP will allow us to address gaps more effectively and once again better cater to the needs of our patients."

Children's Health Foundation's catalyst support has helped to serve patients faster and wrap an entire team of experts around patients and caregivers to meet their unique needs.

With a waitlist still in place, the program team is dedicated to making additional strides. Building on their past successes, they are filled with optimism for the future of child and adolescent mental health care at Children's Hospital.

> **"There was a time where our team was simply trying to put out fires. Now it feels like we can really prevent them from happening."**
>
> – Nicole Sibo, RN

Emery's Collection of

RESILIENCE

The Bravery Bead program gives children a visual story of their health care experience. Children's Hospital patients and clients at TVCC collect various beads that represent different elements of care. For each poke, physio session, visit from Ollie the Therapeutic Clown, or birthday in hospital, our children and youth receive a bead. This donor funded program helps them honour and celebrate the challenges they have made it through.

When children, like Emery, face a chronic condition their diagnosis comes with the need for lifelong care. Before she was even born, Emery was diagnosed with DiGeorge Syndrome – a chromosome mutation that affects her lungs, heart, and means she has a very weak immune system. Children's Hospital has been with Emery and her family for every step of her health care journey. She has needed frequent monitoring, surgeries and treatments across departments.

Emery's close bond to Children's Hospital means she has over 9,000 Bravery Beads – and she wants to share them with you!

Golden hearts are a really big accomplishment – surgery! For Emery, those have been major heart surgeries.

Fish beads represent the long journeys Emery and her family take to get to care!

Her smile face beads are often dated, reminding her when she finished an admission or a long round of treatments.

Her beads are also special because they have helped Emery explain to her classmates why she is in the hospital so often and the amount of care she needs!

"This is what brave looks like

– Emery's Mom

Unraveling the *Mysteries* of Rare Disease

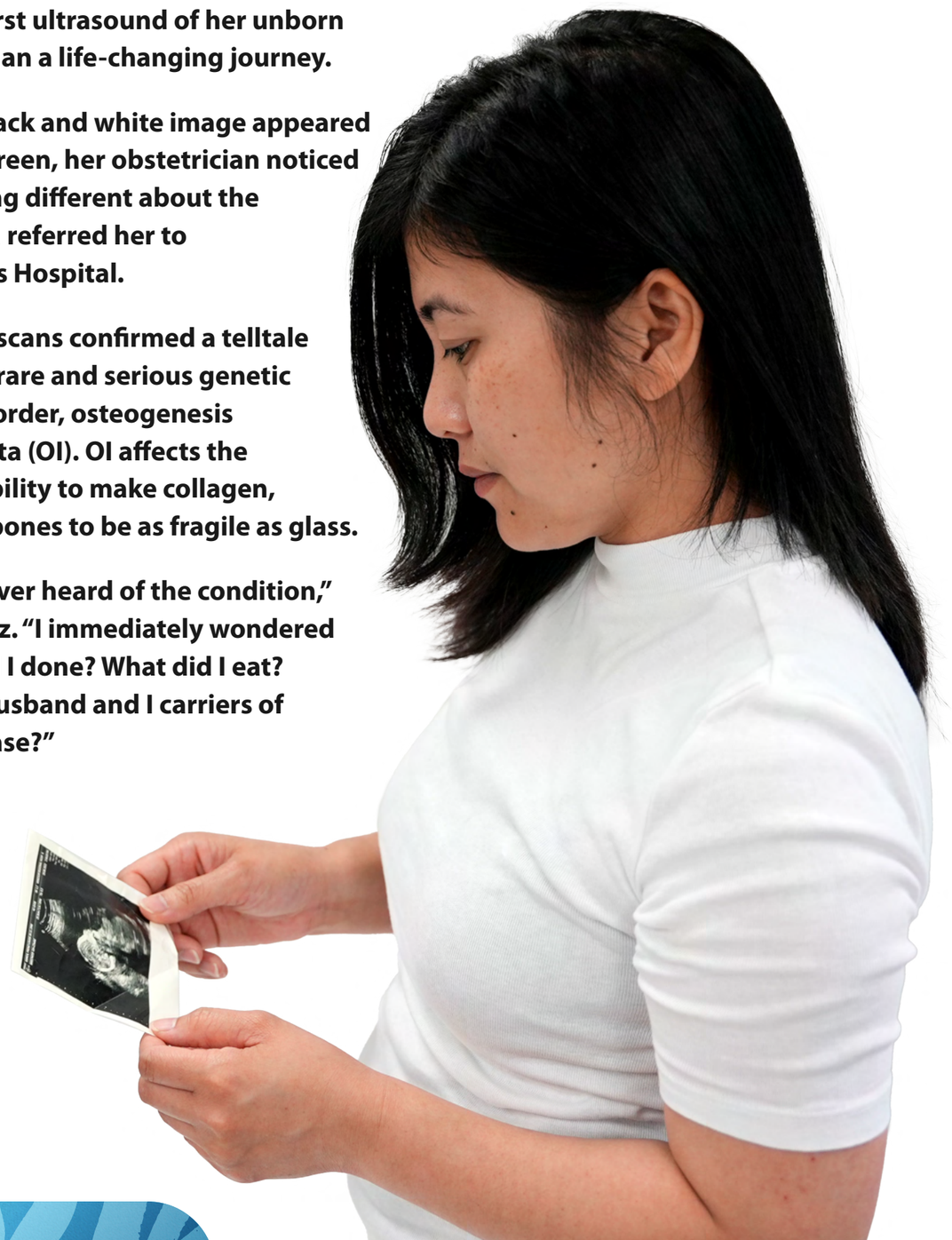
One-third of Children's Hospital's patients have a rare disease. With your support, the hospital is advancing diagnosis, care and treatment in the field to transform children's futures.

Frenz's first ultrasound of her unborn baby began a life-changing journey.

As the black and white image appeared on the screen, her obstetrician noticed something different about the fetus and referred her to Children's Hospital.

Multiple scans confirmed a telltale sign of a rare and serious genetic bone disorder, osteogenesis imperfecta (OI). OI affects the body's ability to make collagen, causing bones to be as fragile as glass.

"I had never heard of the condition," said Frenz. "I immediately wondered what had I done? What did I eat? Are my husband and I carriers of this disease?"



OI can be inherited or caused by a spontaneous gene mutation.

When Gabrielle was born, she already had eight bone fractures because of her condition.

"Having her, she's my first child, I was full of excitement. But knowing she had a rare bone disease; I was so scared. What was going to be her future?"

Rare diseases collectively aren't rare. In Canada, an estimated one in twelve people live with a rare disease – with the majority starting in childhood.

More than 7,000 rare diseases have been identified, and dozens of new ones are discovered annually. Many are serious, resulting in early mortality or intensive follow-up and care.

"About one-third of the patients who come through our doors here at Children's Hospital have a rare disease, often genetic and often complex," said Dr. Craig Campbell, Department Head, Children's Hospital and Chair, Paediatrics, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry. "We know these children deserve and can have a high quality of life. That's why continued advancement in diagnosis, care and treatment are vital."

Rare disease is a public health issue that has long been in the shadows. However, with rapid technological innovation, growing public awareness and increased investment, the future looks brighter.

Inspired by patients, like Gabrielle, medical professionals at Children's Hospital and the broader LHSC are leading and supporting powerful transformations in the field.

With questions swirling in Frenz's head, The Medical Genetics Program of Southwestern Ontario, located at Children's Hospital, provided important answers and some comfort.

Diagnosis is an essential first step in delivering targeted care. Yet, it typically takes individuals with rare disease five to seven years to get an accurate diagnosis, often with wrong answers along the way.

Medical geneticist, Dr. Tugce Balci, was able to confirm Gabrielle's suspected diagnosis of OI. She also identified that the disease stemmed from a spontaneous, non-inherited gene mutation.

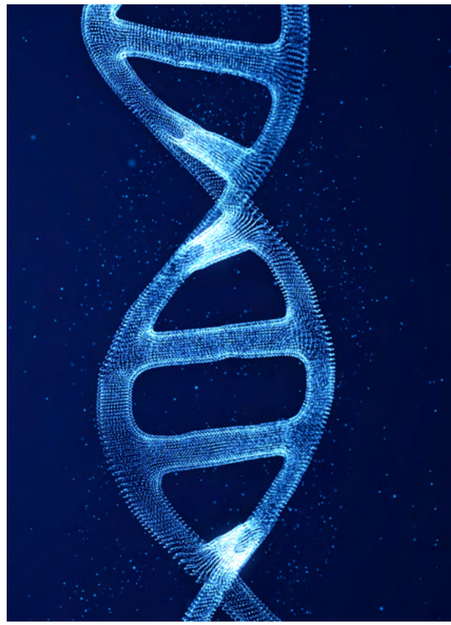
"Without a diagnosis, without a name, there is no prognosis," said Dr. Balci. "There is no way forward. There is no specific treatment available and we're just treating symptoms. Fortunately, there's discoveries happening all the time."

A passionate group of physicians and genetic counselors, Dr. Balci and her colleagues are continually innovating to stay on the cutting-edge.

"Diagnosis is possible in more and more of these individuals, if the right tests are done at the right time," she said. "Our goal is to help patients as early as possible."

Dr. Bekim Sadikovic, LHSC Research Chair in Clinical Genomics and Epigenomics, is at the forefront of genetic testing advancement.

Like Dr. Balci, he knows the significance of obtaining an accurate and early diagnosis.



He has developed a world-leading technology, called EpiSign, that is providing answers to patients with previously difficult or impossible to diagnose diseases.

A significant portion of patients who go through standardized genetic testing don't get a diagnosis.

EpiSign uses artificial intelligence (AI) to measure a patient's epigenome – a chemical fingerprint on our DNA that can switch genes on or off.

Clinical applications of EpiSign technology continue to evolve, currently enabling diagnosis of nearly 200 rare disorders, including genetic disorders and those caused by prenatal exposure to toxins.

"With our technology, 10 to 15% more people are finding a diagnosis than before, and this can be life-changing for them."

At the same time, we are driving cost savings for our health system by shortening the diagnostic odyssey," said Sadikovic.

In collaboration with the global EpiSign Discovery Research network, Dr. Sadikovic continues to expand the impact of the technology. He is currently studying and developing EpiSignatures, the trademark name his lab has adopted, for an additional 700 rare disorders.

"The potential for EpiSign is limitless and goes even beyond diagnosing patients," he said. "We envision also being able to predict prognosis and support enhanced treatment for rare diseases and other genetic disorders, including cancer."

Gabrielle's care is a fight on many fronts.

Medical professionals collaborate to protect her from bone fractures and deformities while improving her physical abilities and quality of life.

Now an active toddler, she receives weekly occupational and physical therapy in Windsor where she lives, along with quarterly infusions at Children's Hospital to strengthen her bones and additional care as needed.

In her short lifetime, Gabrielle has experienced more than 20 fractures. As grateful as Frenz is for the care her daughter receives, she is optimistic there will be better solutions in the near future.

"There's a new medication that's in clinical trial right now, so it gives me hope," said Frenz. "There is a YouTube video of a boy with OI dancing, and it's because he has had access to this experimental therapy. I wish that for my daughter."

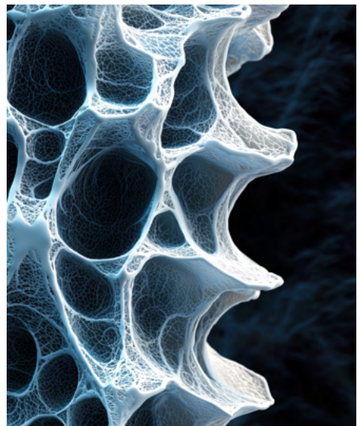
Companies are more frequently investing in developing new drug and biopharmaceutical therapies for rare disease.

In neuromuscular medicine, Children's Hospital has been the most active and successful Canadian paediatric centre in implementing life-changing clinical trial opportunities for patients.

That includes clinical trials for a rare disorder called Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), which causes progressive muscle wasting, and can ultimately affect a child's ability to sit, walk, swallow or even breathe. Because of these trials for novel medications, gene therapy, called Zolgensma, is a reality for SMA patients at Children's Hospital.

Patients now receive a one-time treatment that replaces the missing or non-functioning gene, stopping the disease from worsening.

"We are now routinely giving gene therapy and changing the course of these patients' illness. We're eliminating the risk of death and helping them enjoy often near normal lives," said Dr. Campbell, who has been instrumental in securing these clinical trial opportunities. "Now we are starting to attract similar opportunities for rare bone diseases, including OI."



Children's Hospital's Rare Bone Disease Clinic is a new ultra-specialized clinic led by Dr. Funmbi Babalola, an early career physician scientist, with advocacy for the clinic provided by Dr. Leanne Ward, a world leader in paediatric bone disorders.

With Dr. Ward's expert leadership, the clinic has already attracted five sought-after clinical trials, testing new therapies for children with OI, achondroplasia and hypochondroplasia. Achondroplasia causes short-limbed dwarfism, and hypochondroplasia is its more mild form.

"Attracting clinical trials, like these, is particularly vital for our patients in Canada," said Dr. Ward, noting a mere 60% of rare disease treatments are approved in Canada and the process typically takes up to six years longer compared with Europe and the United States.

Fifteen-year-old Reiko is among the patients benefiting from the new clinical trials running at Children's Hospital.

Reiko has one of the most severe cases of OI that Drs. Ward and Babalola have ever seen. The teen has experienced more than 1,000 fractures and required 16 surgeries.

Based in Goderich, his family couldn't be more thankful to be participating in a study of a new medication which brings hope of fewer fractures, less pain and improved mobility.

"Close to home clinical trial access means our son can enjoy a more normal and stable life, while still receiving a modern and potentially life-changing treatment," said his mom, Jessica. "We are thankful to Children's Hospital for their expertise, as well as the comfort and hope that they bring to our family."

Reiko is a joint patient of Children's Hospital and Shriners Hospitals for Children Canada, who recently announced a first-of-its-kind affiliation agreement. The new formalized partnership between the hospitals is fueling further advancements in care, teaching and research to improve the lives of children with rare bone disease.

With the increased activity in the rare disease space, Dr. Balci and neurologist Dr. Sunita Venkateswaran are leading efforts for a unified regional rare disease strategy.

The South Western Ontario Rare Disease Program (SWORD) will elevate the needs of the local patient population and support enhanced collaboration across care, clinical trials and research.

"We are really proud to be welcoming a Rare Disease Patient Care Navigator and Clinical Trial Navigator who will kick-start our efforts," said Dr. Balci.

Building off Children's Hospital's longstanding legacy of rare disease advocacy, SWORD will serve as a vital connection both internally and nationally, maximizing benefits and making a significant impact for patients.

"I'm so thankful for Children's Hospital," said Frenz. "I can't express how knowledgeable, supportive and approachable the health care professionals are. Without them Gabrielle might not be here or have the same quality of life. They are constantly innovating for her and other patients."

Children's Health Foundation donors are also at the heart of rare disease patient care and advancement. From funding programs that help the hospital to feel more like a home to fueling game-changing discoveries, donor support transforms futures and brings hope to this significant patient population.

Every day, Frenz feels blessed to have Gabrielle in her life. She is awed by her two-year-old's feisty and independent personality.

A tiny force to be reckoned with, Gabrielle loves music, books and going outside.

"She makes me strong," said Frenz. "I didn't know how strong I was until I had her. I didn't know what I was capable of."

A LOOK AT BONE HEALTH

Donor supports Rare Bone Disease Clinic, with gift of cutting-edge equipment

With a special purchase, an anonymous donor is helping to improve care and foster innovation for patients with rare bone diseases.

The new Dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) machine at Children's Hospital employs low-dose x-ray technology to measure bone density plus fat and muscle mass.

This state-of-the-art imaging machine is crucial for monitoring patients with rare bone disease or other conditions that can affect bone health – including cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis and anorexia nervosa.

Previously, Children's Hospital had to refer patients to St. Joseph's Health Care London to receive the scan.

"Having our own dedicated machine opens a world of possibilities," said Dr. Leanne Ward, Special Consultant to Children's Hospital in rare paediatric bone disorders. "With a DEXA on-site, we can provide more comprehensive patient care and be better positioned to attract additional life-changing international clinical trials."

Health Sciences

DRS. ANNA GUNZ AND LESLEY GITTINGS

OUR FOCUS:

Nature can powerfully influence wellness. We aim to explore the effectiveness of prescribing nature – written recommendations to connect with the natural world – in paediatric health care settings.

OUR RESEARCH:

Our study will explore the feasibility and impact of nature prescriptions for adolescent patients with mental health concerns. We hypothesize that this intervention will be successfully implemented by health care staff, accepted by patients and help reduce depression and anxiety symptoms in participants.

OUR VISION:

Cost-effective interventions, like nature prescribing, are urgently needed to respond to the mental health crises. Our study will provide foundational evidence that could lead to wide-scale adoption of nature prescribing in paediatric care.

SCIENTIST INNOVATION GRANT WINNERS
FUNDED BY CHILDREN'S HEALTH FOUNDATION

Genetics & Molecular Biology

DRS. NATHALIE BÉRUBÉ AND CAROLINE SCHILD-POULTER

OUR FOCUS:

Skraban-Deardorff syndrome is a newly discovered rare neuro-developmental disorder caused by mutations in the WDR26 gene. We are interested in unraveling the causes of Skraban-Deardorff syndrome to support improved care and treatment of diagnosed children.

OUR RESEARCH:

Our research will illuminate the WDR26 gene's role and impact in neurodevelopment. We hypothesize that it is crucial in the proper functioning of the CTLH complex, a group of proteins important for regulating chromatin organization and gene expression in neurons.

OUR VISION:

Through enhanced characterization of WDR26, we will be able to help identify promising therapeutics to improve patient quality of life. The results from these studies will also help us to better understand molecular events occurring during brain development.

EXPANDING

Personalized Care at TVCC

Thanks to the multidisciplinary and highly collaborative team at TVCC, each child and youth is seen for their unique traits and needs.

Children who share the same diagnosis can have vastly different experiences.

Cerebral palsy (CP) symptoms, for instance, vary widely. Clients with Level One CP can walk without limitation, while those with Level Five CP have limited motor function and typically no means of independent mobility.

Knowing this, TVCC crafts clinics to ensure clients' care is as unique as they are.

"At TVCC, we're not prescribing top-down solutions. We're looking at how we can build this system of supports and services together," said Dr. Jacqueline Ogilvie, Developmental Paediatrician and Medical Director, TVCC. "Every client has their own combination of puzzle pieces, each of their pictures looks a little bit different. So should their care."

Comprehensive care requires coordination across specialties, from developmental paediatrics and gastroenterology to physiotherapy and neurology. TVCC's CP clinics bring many professionals together in one space so clients with complex needs can see their whole team and address their varied needs all at once.

To build on the clinics' success, TVCC crafted the next step in best care. ***This March, TVCC's support from Children's Health Foundation allowed them to expand their CP clinic capacity by 200 percent!***

This expansion has:

- Improved wait times, bringing TVCC closer to their ultimate goal – less than six months from time of referral to first visit with the CP team.
- Enabled clients to be matched with the unique level of support they need.
- Created more flexibility in how clients are seen.

TVCC now provides two pathways of care for clients with CP. The first offers longer appointments for more complex needs, including multidisciplinary care and initial consultations. The second provides shorter appointments for quick concerns, such as medication issues or Botox injections, ensuring faster access to answers and support. This approach enhances flexibility and responsiveness.

"We are working to create unique pathways for children and youth with disabilities that are based on their specific needs and goals, as opposed to the label of their diagnosis," shared Dr. Ogilvie.

With our community's support, TVCC has increased capacity to provide children and youth with care based on what they need as an individual – not an assumption of their diagnosis. Thank you to our donors for ensuring that each child and youth receives the expert, personalized care they require.

SHARING HOPE

Moments of care, connection and strength from our Children's community

"My son Brooks was born with two life-altering conditions and requires ongoing care at Children's Hospital. During our visit in April there was a moment that brings a smile to our family. Brooks was scheduled for a minor procedure and it happened to be on the day of our fundraising event, Calves for a Cause. Brooks was worried he would have to miss the event. Fortunately, everything went well! The staff worked diligently to get him out safely and in time to participate in our cow auction. As I was dressing him to leave, he stood up, with his arms out ready to fly and enthusiastically yelled, 'I am king of the hospital!' Thank you to all the health care professionals who make him feel this way. You go above and beyond to ensure he is as healthy and happy as possible."

- Sarah Markus

"At Living Lighting on Richmond, my coworkers and I had an idea to upcycle the crystals from broken chandeliers into dazzling holiday ornaments. We proudly sell them and donate and match every dollar to support Children's Hospital. The amazing care team at Children's Childhood Cancer Program treated my daughter, Emily, for osteosarcoma, and we are very grateful to everyone who cared for her. She especially enjoyed Ollie the Clown's antics, and all of the donor-funded programs, like Art Therapy and Music Therapy. Thank you to everyone who purchased one of our ornaments! We are so happy we can give back in this way!"

- Christina McKaig

It's not *"just"* A HEADACHE

As a global leader in paediatric headache and migraine care, Dr. Marissa Lagman-Bartolome is furthering preventive care and earlier diagnosis for our children.

Caring for the future of children's health means acknowledging and investing in conditions that are overlooked, understudied, or in Dr. Marissa Lagman-Bartolome's case, seen as "not a big deal."

A paediatric neurologist and headache specialist, Dr. Lagman-Bartolome sees her young patients facing the pervasive myth that headaches are normal. In fact, headaches are abnormal and a primary symptom of migraine – the most debilitating health condition for children worldwide.

"Migraine is the most disabling brain disease in children as young as five through to teenagers. They often experience daily migraine attacks and are bedridden due to dizziness, nausea, vomiting, fogginess, fatigue or visual changes," explained Dr. Lagman-Bartolome, one of only four formally trained paediatric headache neurologists in the country.

The seriousness of migraine symptoms and the need for frequent doctor's visits cause children to miss school, extracurriculars or time with friends, making migraine isolating for young patients.

To protect the lives of children facing headaches, Dr. Lagman-Bartolome is developing the first Comprehensive Paediatric Headache Centre in Ontario at Children's Hospital. Her goal is to ensure children's pain is recognized and responded to with the best care.

Dr. Lagman-Bartolome and Children's Hospital are becoming a hub of headache care, treating the most medically complex patients, while their partners in regional sites gain the education they need to treat less severe cases right in their communities.

The faster children have their headaches recognized, diagnosed and managed, the more likely they are to be headache-free after one year, possibly never progressing to debilitating and chronic migraine.

"The simultaneously heartbreaking and heartwarming thing I hear almost every day is parents thanking me," said Dr. Lagman-Bartolome. "They see the benefits of the best headache care for their child while also wishing they had help from someone like me decades ago, so they didn't have to suffer with disabling migraine attacks their whole lives."

Investing in headache and migraine care at Children's Hospital means protecting generations of children from a debilitating brain disease and healing generations past as they watch the lives of their children improve.

Children's Health Foundation is honoured to support the life-changing work of Dr. Marissa Lagman-Bartolome and her fellow experts in Paediatric Neurology at Children's Hospital.

Dr. Lagman-Bartolome is leading comprehensive headache and migraine care by:

- Providing regional hospital partners with on-site training to perform preventative headache treatments like nerve blocks.
- Providing virtual consultations for primary care providers to help them feel confident in their diagnoses and treatment plans for patients with headaches.
- Assisting with groundbreaking paediatric migraine trials that are working to improve access to migraine-specific medications and targeted therapies.
- Leading a nine-person working group to develop an evidence-based, expert consensus statement that guides clinicians on the best treatment for young patients in the Emergency Room with severe migraine attacks.
- Hosting webinar series on paediatric headaches with patient support groups like Migraine Canada, and Canadian Headache Society, to educate health care professionals on best practices for headache and migraine treatment.
- Co-leading the Paediatric Canadian Headache Network that promotes research, quality improvement projects and provides educational materials to increase awareness of headache disorders.

Innovative Ideas Become Reality

Donors help transform Children's health professionals' ideas into the best care for children and families.

When Children's experts bring their ideas to Children's Health Foundation, something magical happens – children's care is transformed.

"When I returned to London and Children's Hospital, I had a program idea that would change infants' lives, but I didn't know who would fund it," shared Developmental Paediatrician Dr. Jacqueline Ogilvie.

Dr. Ogilvie envisioned Help Me Thrive, where children who are under age two and face prolonged hospitalization receive specialized developmental enrichment to promote infant attachment and caregiver bonding.

"Help Me Thrive is built on existing research and evidence on early brain development and infant mental health. It wasn't a matter of whether the program would work, but where would I get the resources to run it?"

The answer? Donors to Children's Health Foundation. Donor funding helps staff and partners develop ideas into programs that make up today's best care.

Other sources of funding, like research or government grants, tend to be risk-averse and require specific data to move forward. The Foundation's flexible and visionary investments give Children's experts the ability to launch life-changing initiatives.

Thanks to our generous community, evidence-backed programs can launch quickly, immediately changing the experience for children and families in hospital.

Every "Thrive" baby gets their own bedside poster with a picture, a few personal facts and developmental goals that the family, Thrive team and therapists define together. Chronic hospitalization changes the childhood experience and, without intervention, can have serious impacts on development. Early goals may be as 'small' as building endurance for bottle feeds to later skills, like gaining core strength for crawling.

"On the Thrive team, it's not about a checklist – it's about seeing what skills a child has and how we can adapt in the hospital environment to get them to the next step," said Dr. Ogilvie. "One mom shared that their poster helped their team see the child as a baby first. That's precisely the Thrive team's goal: to highlight that infants are trying to do the important tasks of being a baby – sleeping, soothing, feeding, growing, playing – while needing medical care."

Help Me Thrive has assisted more than twice the number of children than anticipated. That's more parents enjoying the connection and comfort of smiling faces, laughter and a hospital environment tailored specifically to their child and family.

Thanks to Children's Health Foundation donors, Help Me Thrive became a staple of Children's Hospital's best care, encouraging Children's Hospital to permanently fund the program. This transition to permanent, sustainable funding means the next generous gift is able to support the next big idea.

You help bring **hope** through opportunity!

Your generous support has empowered Children's health professionals to innovate and expand vital initiatives, ensuring the best possible care. Help Me Thrive is just one example of the impact you've made – here are several more:

1

Transition navigation programs ensure children and youth have the confidence and skills needed to smoothly move into adult care. Since 2013 your funding of transition navigation roles has paved the way for a more fulsome transition strategy and program, protecting young people's well-being during this vulnerable phase.

2

In 2019, your funding helped launch Family Integrated Care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The program helped families learn to read their child's medical chart and embrace their unique role as an important member of their child's care team. Today, the program is part of all nurse onboarding and training for that unit, and parents remain a trusted insight into their child's behaviours and responses to care.

3

In 2021, your funding helped a research team from Children's Health Research Institute bring the Comfort Promise program to the Paediatric Emergency Department. Their research and implementation has prioritized effective pain management, helping children feel better during difficult procedures, including needles.

Each of these programs transformed the ways Children's can provide the best care. Your generosity is an enduring source of hope for Children's experts and our children and youth facing life-changing diagnoses.

Shoulder to *lean on*

Charlotte is full of laughter, fun-loving mischief, and great heart.

Compelled to help those in need, she has dedicated herself to making a difference – in her work, her personal life and her planned legacy.

Charlotte enjoyed a long and proud career at the London Courthouse, where her last role was in the Victim/Witness Assistance Program. She supported individuals and families who had experienced or witnessed serious crime.

After retiring, she found joy and renewed purpose from picking up golf, joining a sorority group and volunteering for Children's Health Foundation and other local charities.

"My mom cares deeply about those in need and always wants to do whatever she can to be there for them," said Fiona, her daughter. "When I visit her at her new retirement living environment, I often find her helping someone."

A natural decision for her caring self, Charlotte has left a gift in her Will in support of patients at Children's Hospital. Her inspiring commitment grows on her decades of generosity to the cause, including a recent transformational gift to the Childhood Cancer Program.

A loving mother of three children, five grandchildren and a great grandson, Charlotte feels fortunate that her family has never needed the hospital for a serious health issue. However, she knows there are many families who do, and felt compelled to make a positive impact.

"My mom wanted to make a commitment for a legacy donation to make sure that we as a family knew her wishes," added Fiona. "In the future, when that time comes, it will be an honour to make sure her wishes are carried out."

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childhealth.ca/give-smarter

2024–2025

Financials and **Key Numbers**

Hope isn't a wish; it's created every day
with help from caring donors like you.

Total Revenue:
$18.3 million

18,917 donors
rallied to save and improve young lives

39,819 donations
strengthened and transformed care

View the full financial statements at:
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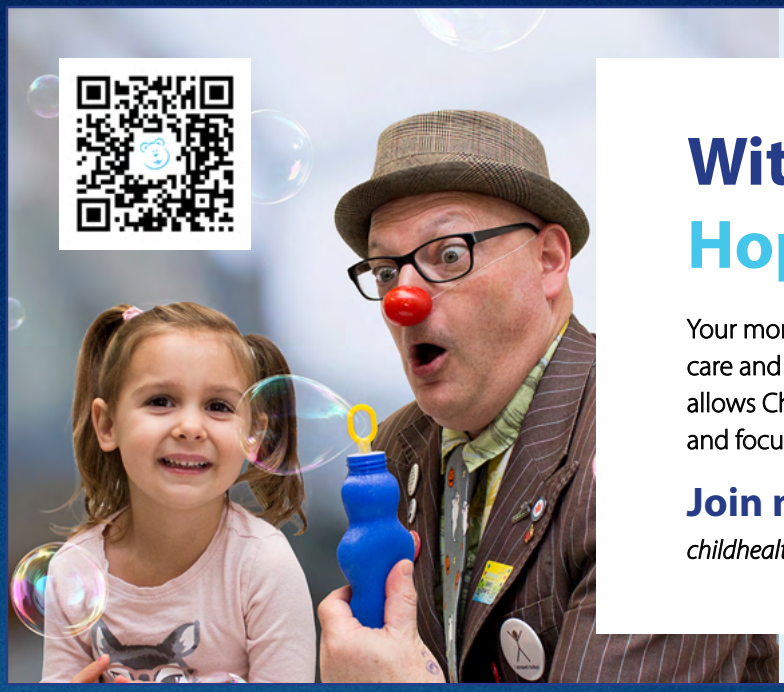

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Hope Lives at Children's

Your monthly donation is one of the best ways to ensure the best care and most hope for children – always. Your dedicated support allows Children's to plan further ahead, launch long-term projects, and focus on achieving lasting improvements.

Join now!

childhealth.ca/monthly-giving

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