



VICTORIA HOSPITALS
FOUNDATION

*In*Touch

VHF NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2024



New C-Arm,
one of six
imaging tools
being funded
by donors

An update on
Vancouver Island's
first mitral valve
repair surgery

Local couple brings
cardiac health
study to Victoria

—Genevieve (RN), Dallas (RN), Jennifer (Cardiovascular Technologist),
Dr. Anthony Della Siega (Interventional Cardiologist), Cara
(Interventional Radiographer), and Bonnie (RN) in front of a C-Arm

A Note of GRATITUDE

Imaging is Power is a need and a dream

Dear readers and friends of the Victoria Hospitals Foundation,

Over the last few months, the Foundation has provided us—your radiologists at Royal Jubilee (RJH) and Victoria General (VGH) hospitals—a platform to share our expertise, our passion for helping others, and our vision for the future of Island healthcare. When we illustrated the crucial need for upgraded imaging tools, and an innovative solution to bring first-in-Canada technology to Victoria at a third of the cost, the Foundation listened, and acted.

Imaging is Power was born from a need and a dream; it truly gained momentum because of you—our community, the very community we have the privilege to take care of.

The impact you are making is immeasurable. You are touching the journey of so many of our patients because almost everyone needs imaging. **You are lessening wait times, allowing new procedures to happen, and elevating the patient experience.** This spring, we will upgrade the first of the three MRIs you helped fund—a positive step towards a brighter future for Islanders. **In times when our hospitals are busier than ever, you are leading the way for better healthcare.** Thank you.

Many of my colleagues in care feel it, too. Dr. Anthony Della Siega, featured on the cover and through this campaign, has shared that the new C-Arm will be used five times a day to bring about sharper, faster images for cardiac patients. Dr. Lynn Fedoruk and Dr. Jill Kelly (page 4), illustrate how equipment funded through the Foundation's previous campaign, *Emerge Stronger*, is redefining the care provided on Vancouver Island. While attending the Foundation's *Visions* gala last November (page 6), I spoke to many others with a role in our hospitals and found there is an overwhelming sense of gratitude by my peers on the role you play in healthcare. We believe in this too: at the gala, our group of Victoria Radiologists personally pledged \$100,000 in support of *Imaging is Power*.

Whether you are supporting this campaign, the Foundation's Greatest Needs fund, or an area of care that matters to you, know you are serving our community for the better.



With sincere gratitude,

Dr. Alan Andrew

Radiologist and Medical Director,
Island Health Medical Imaging



Your Impending IMPACT

Focusing on more imaging tools

Imaging is Power is gaining momentum unlike any other Foundation campaign before. The community sees the need for these monumental tools, and is responding in numbers. As we mark \$7 million raised, we turn our attention from MRI technology to three other imaging tools featured in the campaign: a C-Arm, SPECT/CT scanner, and CT scanner.

Imaging is
POWER

\$1M \$2M \$3M \$4M \$5M \$6M **\$7M** \$8M \$9M \$10M \$11M

Campaign progress as of January 20, 2024.

Our journey to \$11 million is well underway. Help us reach the next milestone!

→ Donate now: victoriahf.ca/imaging

C-Arm: A new machine for RJH's Heart Catheterization Lab

“The C-Arm is the most vital piece of equipment that my team needs to view and fix the heart. With it, everything I do procedurally is done under X-ray vision. When someone experiencing a heart attack comes into our lab, our team mobilizes quickly—around the patient, around the C-Arm, too. The C-Arm turns on the lights for us—it captures images of the heart in real time, from all angles.”—Dr. Anthony Della Siega

→ Read more of Dr. Della Siega's letter: victoriahf.ca/dr-della-siegas-letter



Benefits of a new machine include less radiation, clearer images, a reduction in unnecessary procedures, and advanced technology



The C-Arm being replaced is used over 2,000 times per year



The current C-Arm is 13 years old and has exceeded its lifespan



The new C-Arm costs \$2 million

SPECT/CT scanner: Replacing a 23-year-old piece of technology at RJH



The SPECT/CT is used to determine if a cancer has metastasized, search for internal bleeds, and explore the health of heart tissue

A SPECT/CT scanner is essentially a hybrid of two machines: the nuclear medicine SPECT looks at functional anatomy of organs, whereas the CT scan performed immediately after captures images of their physical anatomy. A computer merges the images from the SPECT and CT scanner, so the physician can see the function of the organ overlying the anatomy and pinpoint the issue.



The current SPECT/CT has been out of operation since fall 2022—it is desperately needed



The new SPECT/CT will increase the speed of scans, and reduce wait times



The new SPECT/CT scanner costs \$3 million

CT scanner: Replacing the oldest CT scanner on Vancouver Island at VGH



Applications include the detection of stroke, blood clots, cancer, and fractures



The CT scanner being replaced performs 15,000 scans per year



The current CT scanner is 16 years old, the oldest on the Island



A new CT scanner costs \$3.5 million

The CT scanner uses a series of X-ray images to build a 3-D image of the body, which gives physicians a very clear picture about a patient's area of concern. The images give physicians clarity in determining what the next steps will be for a patient, and can allow for less invasive procedures often resulting in better outcomes.



Your IMPACT

A new Surgical Option

Thank you for bringing new, advanced procedures to Vancouver Island!

On September 19, 2023, the first minimally-invasive mitral valve repair surgery on Vancouver Island was performed at RJH by Dr. Lynn Fedoruk and her surgical team. Since then, 11 more eligible patients have undergone the procedure utilizing the minimally-invasive new surgical treatment option, performed by Dr. Fedoruk, Dr. Rohit Singal, and their team.

Equipment funded through *Emerge Stronger* allows surgeons to perform the mitral valve repair through a small space between the ribs, rather than performing a sternotomy, which involves cutting open the patient's breastbone. The incision is eight to ten centimeters in length, rather than the standard 20 plus centimetres.

“**This is a procedure that the patients are looking for and, if they're eligible, can now be provided on the Island with a great degree of success.** We are proud and grateful to offer this option to our Island patients,” said **Dr. Lynn Fedoruk**, Medical Lead, Division of Cardiac Surgery, RJH. “Through this new procedure, there is no healing of the breastbone, which often makes the recovery process quicker, with the potential for decreased length of hospital stay. Depending on what they do for activity and hobbies, patients may also have a quicker return to activity. The key is that not every patient is eligible for the minimally-invasive approach, but it's a game-changer for those who can benefit from it.”



Dr. Lynn Fedoruk

Those who undergo this form of mitral valve surgery will receive it at RJH—Vancouver Island's referral site for cardiac care and the only centre that performs open-heart surgeries on the Island. In supporting *Emerge Stronger*, donors to the Foundation have helped open another opportunity for patients to stay on the Island when they need advanced medical care.

→ Read more from Dr. Lynn Fedoruk: victoriahf.ca/dr-fedoruks-letter

More IMPACT

The mitral valve repair surgery equipment is one of 200+ funded through the *Emerge Stronger* campaign. **Dr. Jill Kelly**, campaign spokesperson and Medical Lead of Emergency at RJH, reflects on the impact of our last campaign:

“Every day, I am reminded of the power of donors, and what you have accomplished through the campaign. When I order blood work for my patients, I know that, very soon, these test results will come back much faster

thanks to the new Chemistry Line you funded. When I send a child up to the Pediatric ICU, I know that a new and specialized trauma bed will support their journey—and, at times, one of two new pediatric cardiology ultrasounds. When a patient needs immediate eye surgery, I know a state-of-the-art retinal laser means they will get the treatment they need to mitigate permanent loss of eyesight.

It all matters. So very much. As care providers, we have a drive and obligation to ensure that all our patients receive the best possible care. It takes our expertise and dedication—and it takes the right equipment. You help us with the latter, and it makes all the difference.”



PatientSTORY

How Imaging Proved Powerful in Treating a Rare Virus

While walking her beloved Bernese Mountain dogs in late October of 2021, Diane remembers coughing into a tissue and seeing blood. That prompted a visit to urgent care, where X-rays showed her lungs looked unwell, and medication for pneumonia was prescribed.

Two weeks later, Diane felt increasingly worse, so her husband Garry called an ambulance. At VGH, doctors sensed something greater was wrong and transferred Diane to RJH.

“She was in emergency, and they called me, saying she was in dire condition and to get there immediately,” says Garry.

Doctors in the Intensive Care Unit determined Diane had vasculitis: an autoimmune disease that attacks the patient’s blood vessels leading to serious internal bleeding. Diane was placed in a coma to protect her brain, lungs, heart, and kidneys as doctors and nurses worked to stop the bleeding.

“There was regular medical imaging, both CT scans and MRI, as well as X-rays, to determine what the long-term damage to her organs might be,” recalls Garry. “The ICU doctors and nurses had a meeting every morning to plan the next steps and scans; Diane was so well looked after.”

Garry says Diane’s doctors were supportive, but realistic. He was told she might not survive the night.

“I got everybody in there: her sons, her sister and her brother-in-law,” remembers Garry, tearing up. “Everybody said goodbye and I stayed at the hospital that night... and her heart stopped, failed. I was beside the bed and watched as they brought her back.”

With the bleeding stopped, **medical imaging showed Diane’s kidneys weren’t badly damaged. CT scans revealed her lungs were healthy, while MRI showed the same for her brain.** The images guided the decision to transition Diane out of the coma.

Diane was sent home after spending 71 days at RJH. Doctors shared with Garry that they only see one to two cases of vasculitis a year, making the couple thankful for the care teams who had the expertise—and the tools—to navigate the rare condition.

In sharing their story, Diane and Garry hope to inspire support for improvements to medical imaging technology, and in turn the work care teams are performing in Victoria’s hospitals, through **Imaging is Power.**



Diane, Garry, and their Bernese Mountain dogs

“Incredible people are working in our hospitals, and need community support,” says Diane. “The doctors and nurses are amazing. The self-sacrifice that they give needs more recognition. They saved my life.”

“**Vasculitis is not the first thing that comes to mind for an ICU physician. It is very rare, in the order of one in hundreds of thousands.** It’s an autoimmune condition, attacking the blood vessels and damaging them so badly that, in some cases, blood leaks into the lungs.

Throughout Diane’s treatment, we relied heavily on medical imaging to answer diagnostic questions. CT scans were essential in pinpointing where the bleeding was occurring. She had at least three CT scans of her chest. She had ultrasounds of her legs. And an MRI gave us a clear picture that her brain—which can be another target for vasculitis—was healthy.

Thank you to supporters of the Foundation for ensuring we have the best of this vital technology, so we can better help our patients get back to their real lives. It gives us purpose to see our patients make a strong recovery.”

— **Dr. Daniel Ovakim, ICU Physician, RJH & VGH**

→ Read more of Dr. Ovakim’s letter:
victoriahf.ca/dr-ovakims-letter

Visions

Thank you to our wonderful 2023 Visions steering committee!

The Foundation's 2023 signature gala *Visions* was a historic moment for Vancouver Island and our Victoria hospitals. **Over 600 guests—community leaders, speakers, donors, sponsors, and care teams alike—united to celebrate local healthcare, and raised a record-breaking \$2.5 million in support of *Imaging is Power*.** Hosted at the Fairmont Empress, the evening was a testament to the generous spirit of the community, and the admiration for the care provided in our local hospitals.



“It is a privilege to be witness to our profoundly committed community, and to what can be accomplished when we all work together. I couldn't be more grateful that our hospitals were celebrated with this immense show of generosity,” says **Avery Brohman**, Foundation CEO. “*Visions* was a vibrant unison of many generousities, talents, and care champions. It truly takes a village, and I extend a sincere thank-you to our donors giving, our guests answering the call, our speakers sharing their stories, our sponsors stepping up to new heights, local businesses offering auction items, and our strong *Visions* committee, led by Charlotte Salomon, KC, championing this event. Together, we elevate, and together we uplift our hospitals.”



The night celebrated many aspects of hospital care, highlighting RJH's MS Clinic, VGH's Intensive Care Unit, and the Medical Imaging departments at both sites. All will benefit from a modernized MRI machine that will be funded thanks to *Visions* guests.



“At Heart Wealth Management Group of Raymond James Ltd., my support for the Victoria Hospitals Foundation is deeply personal. Each year, we're inspired to contribute, knowing our efforts directly enhance local healthcare. It's our way of giving back to the community that nurtures us, our families, and our clients.”

—April Dorey Hartwig, Senior Wealth Manager, Heart Wealth Management Group of Raymond James Ltd.



“It is an honour to sponsor the Victoria Hospitals Foundation and *Visions* gala, which unites the community to support our local hospitals. It is crucial we invest and ensure accessibility to top-tier medical equipment and services—and work collectively to nurture our community's well-being today and well into the future.”

—Dan McGowan, General Manager, Fairmont Empress



“Royal Bank of Canada is a global financial institution with a purpose-driven, principles-led approach to delivering leading performance. Our success comes from the 94,000+ employees who leverage their imaginations and insights to bring our vision, values, and strategy to life so we can help our clients thrive and communities prosper.”

—RBC Royal Bank

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“BCLC is proud to support the Victoria Hospitals Foundation and help create healthy, thriving communities on Vancouver Island and across our province. In addition to our direct sponsorship, revenue generated by BCLC goes back to the Province of B.C. to help fund healthcare, education, and community programs.”

—Lara Gerrits, Director of Social Purpose & Community and Stakeholder Engagement, BCLC

Philanthropy brings Provincial Health Study to *Island Patients*

At RJH, the Vascular Risk and Prevention Clinic (VRPC) sees patients who are at high risk for future cardiac events. The mission of the Clinic's interdisciplinary team is to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease (CVD) on Vancouver Island in patients at the highest levels of risk.

Thanks to the generosity of a local couple, the Clinic will soon have the opportunity to be part of **SAVE BC: Study to Avoid Cardiovascular Events in BC.**

The program is designed to better identify, screen, and study patients and families with premature CVD. The program is an important step towards a safer future for those at-risk. SAVE BC is already at hospitals in Vancouver, the Fraser Valley, and Kelowna.

Across Canada, CVD is a leading cause of death. **With a growing aging population, and 24 per cent of those living on Vancouver Island over the age of 65, there is a need and opportunity to advance preventative cardiovascular care here.**

It is because of Victoria couple, Al and Eileen Gilchrist, that the study will soon open to cardiac patients on the Island. **Through the Foundation, the Gilchrists have committed \$320,000 over five years to establish SAVE BC at RJH.**

"Many lives are made better, and often saved, when cardiologists apply their knowledge within our health care needs," say **Al and Eileen Gilchrist.** "Bringing the SAVE BC program to Victoria will allow our local physicians to better share in, and enhance, their toolkit of knowledge for cardiac care. Increasing research-based information of premature heart disease will help patients, their families, and our community at large."

By participating in the SAVE BC program, patients at RJH will have the opportunity to contribute to data that will improve the diagnosis and treatment of early onset CVD. Their involvement will also grow regional data to support local treatment long term.



Al and Eileen Gilchrist

Island Health's Medical Director for Heart Health, Dr. Chris Franco, will lead the SAVE BC project on the Island, supported by the Victoria Heart Institute Foundation.

“Our SAVE BC team is working to build a greater understanding of early-onset heart disease in at-risk populations. Support from Al and Eileen Gilchrist, and others, will help evaluate testing for individuals with a family history and establish a program to identify families with premature cardiovascular disease,” says **Dr. Franco.** “Together, we can transform lives and provide comprehensive care for Islanders and their families with early onset CVD.”



In addition to the Gilchrists' pledge, the Foundation will support the VRPC, through generous funding from TD Bank.

The Foundation is grateful for these powerful acts of philanthropy, which will support efforts to better heart health for all on Vancouver Island, and ultimately across the province.

Thank You For Being Our Champion



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