

FALL EDITION 2016

Heart & Soul

YOUR GENEROSITY IN ACTION

Cover Story:
Estelle Craig:
Seizing the day at 101

L-R Robin Melanie Craig and her mother Estelle Craig

WCH
WOMEN'S COLLEGE
HOSPITAL FOUNDATION
Health care for women | REVOLUTIONIZED

INSIDE

Up close and
personal with...
Dr. Paula Rochon

Health tips:
Building better
balance

A special message from Kathy Hay, WCH Foundation president & CEO

Two years ago, my mom had a heart attack. My mom: my rock, my caregiver, the woman who made everything okay.

She opted to undergo bypass surgery. As she was being wheeled into the operating room on a stretcher, it happened: her chin quivered with the fear that something might go wrong. It was the first time I had seen her so vulnerable.

That was the moment the baton was passed. My caregiver now needed to be cared for. It was my time to step forward for her – to be a rock for my mom. I'd just started at Women's College Hospital Foundation, my two grown kids still needed me and, somehow, I also had to find time to care for myself, too. It's a balancing act that, like so many others, I continue to work on every day.

When it comes to aging and caregiving, we all have stories – stories that speak of the complexities of getting older, of caring and being cared for and of our shifting roles as women. That's why, in this issue of Heart & Soul, we're taking a closer look at this topic – and how WCH is helping women and their loved ones age well.



WCH Foundation president & CEO Kathy Hay (R) with her mother

I invite you to share your stories of aging and caregiving with us using the contact information provided in this issue. The more we talk about it, the more we can empower one another to age well, and take care of each other.

By the way, my mom is doing great – and has taken back the baton!

A handwritten signature of Kathy Hay in blue ink.

Engage with Kathy on Twitter! Follow @KathyHay

Up close and personal with...Dr. Paula Rochon

Dr. Paula Rochon is vice-president of research at Women's College Hospital, a geriatrician and a leading health services researcher. Her research focuses on closing gaps in care for older patients by understanding how women and men age differently.

Kathy Hay recently sat down with Dr. Rochon to learn more about what inspires her and her vision for the future of healthcare for older patients.

In your opinion, what is the biggest care gap facing older patients today? One of the biggest gaps is in the form of the data that we don't have – we don't know as much as we should about older people, and specifically about the differences between women and men.

Why is it so crucial to fill this “data gap” when it comes to caring for older people? It's only by filling this data gap that we can make sure research is being translated into providing the very best care for older patients and for all of us. For example, we know that on average women take more medications than men, and as a result women may be at greater risk of complications from drug interactions. But despite this knowledge, there is currently little research on how or why women are being prescribed more medications and how they may differ in the way they respond to drugs. In five or ten years, I'd like to see every piece of research providing information about both women and men, and in particular older people, so that we can fill this data gap and use this valuable information to improve health for all.

What do you enjoy most about your work? It's such a privilege to be able to spend time asking questions and discovering things. It's a very creative process in terms having identified an issue, and then figuring out how you're going to address it, and come up with information that's hopefully going to be helpful to people and make a difference in their lives.

Thank you, Dr. Rochon!



Dr. Paula Rochon, vice-president of research, Women's College Hospital

Estelle Craig: Seizing the day at 101

Estelle Craig says that she often wakes up in the morning and feels ready to take on the world. At age 101, that's something to celebrate.

The Boston native, who has lived in Toronto for 70 years and recently became a patient at Women's College Hospital's Family Practice Health Centre, says the secret to a long life is to "keep busy." Even though her eyesight and hearing aren't what they used to be, Estelle is still committed to that mantra: she's working on her first novel and a children's book, and has plans to start a website for seniors.

Estelle's daughter, Robin Melanie Craig, says that her mom's zest for life is what's kept her young in both body and spirit.

"She thinks young – she thinks like herself and there's no age attached to that," says Robin. "It's not a matter of age, it's how you look at life. And she loves life – every day is special to her."

As her mother's primary caregiver, Robin is focused on ensuring Estelle is receiving care that puts her unique needs first.

"The doctors and nurses at WCH respect her age," she says. "They make care convenient – they do a lot over the phone instead of making her come in. And I'm grateful for the hospital's urgent care clinic, which helps my mom avoid having to wait for hours in an emergency room."

Robin and Estelle's experiences at WCH are exactly what the hospital strives for when it comes to care for all patients, with a particular focus on older patients. Integrated teams of healthcare providers work together with patients to ensure their needs are being met, and innovative ways of delivering care effectively and conveniently – such as over the phone or via internet technology – are setting a new standard.

Although she hasn't been a patient at WCH for long, Estelle feels great about the care she's been receiving. "I had fallen and injured my shoulder, and Robin called the hospital to arrange for someone to do an X-ray. When we arrived, the X-ray specialist was there waiting for us. That was really special."

As for Robin, her mom has been the ultimate role model in aging well. "I just have to look at my mom – she still takes delight in life. I try to live my life that way too."

Your donation today will help WCH continue to provide patient-focused care for more women like Estelle. Visit www.wchf.ca to donate online today!



Grateful WCH patient Estelle Craig (R) with her daughter Robin Baker Leacock

New virtual exhibit launched by WCH's Archives

The Miss Margaret Robins Archives of Women's College Hospital recently launched a new virtual exhibit showcasing the history of WCH's School of Nursing, which educated generations of nurses between 1915 and 1975.

The exhibit can be visited online at: <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/virtual-exhibits/exhibit/memories-of-the-womens-college-hospital-school-of-nursing/>.

For more information, please contact Heather Gardiner, archivist, at 416-323-6323 ext. 4076 or heather.gardiner@wchospital.ca.



WCH student nurses, 1965

Q&A: Caring and being cared for with dignity

We sat down with Dr. Vanessa Rambihar, a family physician at WCH's Family Practice Health Centre, to talk about what older patients and their loved ones can do to ensure they're receiving the best possible care.

For people caring for aging loved ones, what are some signs to watch out for that their loved one may need medical care? Changes in personality or mood, a history of falls or fear of falling, or noticing withdrawal from regular social activities are all important signs that patients may benefit from seeking care. Patients and their caregivers should always feel comfortable seeing their primary care provider if they are concerned in any way about their health as health issues become more complex as we age.

Do you have any advice for older patients and their families when it comes to having difficult conversations about health and caregiving arrangements?

First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge that these conversations are inherently challenging and can take time. My advice would be that it is never too early to reflect on the values that are important to you, and start the conversation with your family, caregivers and healthcare provider regarding your goals of care and wishes for your future.

When it comes to providing care for older patients, what is unique about WCH's approach? The biggest strength of WCH's Family Practice is its interdisciplinary team-based approach offered to patients and caregivers. In addition to family physicians, a wide variety of specialists – including pharmacists, a geriatric nurse, occupational therapists, dieticians, nurse practitioners, social workers and more – work together to help our older patients maintain their quality of life as they navigate the complexities of aging.

What are some resources that patients and their families can access if they have questions about care options and the health system? Primary care providers are a great first point of contact for accessing care as well as services in the community for both patients and caregivers. WCH's Family Practice has a nurse specializing in geriatric care who has a wealth of experience coordinating care. She will meet with patients and their caregivers to determine areas in which we can better support health and independence.

If you're interested in learning more about WCH's programs for older patients or how you or a loved one can register as a patient at WCH's Family Practice Health Centre, call 416-323-6060.



Dr. Vanessa Rambihar, WCH family physician

Your generosity in action!

Your generosity plays a crucial role in advancing Women's College Hospital's commitment to research and care that helps women and their loved ones live and age well.

Here are a few key facts about WCH's special focus on older patients:

- WCH's **Wellness for Independent Seniors (WISE) Program** provides support and resources for patients over 60 who live independently in the community.
- **The Elder Care Program**, housed at WCH's **Family Practice Health Centre**, is a new initiative focused on providing interdisciplinary care for patients 80 and over. A team of health providers work together with patients and their families to ensure their unique care needs are being met.
- Pioneering research studies taking place at WCH strive to **identify gaps in care** for older patients across the health system and better understand the specific needs of women and men when it comes to aging.

Health tips you can use

These health tips are brought to you by WCH's Women's Health Matters website (www.womenshealthmatters.ca). Women's Health Matters is proudly sponsored by Shoppers Drug Mart. To sign up for the Women's Health Matters e-bulletin, visit www.womenshealthmatters.ca/subscribe.

My health matters

WCH WOMEN'S HEALTH MATTERS
WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Building better balance

Balance is essential for mobility and for fall prevention, and is a key element of fitness.

According to WCH physiotherapist Tania Obljubek, balance depends on the complex relationship between your vision, inner ear, joints, muscles and ligaments, which work together to help us navigate the space around us.

Our vision, strength and flexibility can change with age or with health conditions, so for many people, balance requires maintenance.

Here are a few pointers for maintaining and building strong balance as you age:

- **Challenge your balance:** Sit on a fitness ball or practice Tai Chi, yoga or Pilates regularly to help stabilize your core and promote better balance.
- **Stay focused:** Test yourself by walking with a cup of water or coffee (make sure it's not hot!). We often fall when we're not paying attention, so this will help improve focus.
- **Find what works best for you:** Everyone's abilities are different – you may feel in great health, or you might have a disability, injury or health condition that makes mobility difficult. To incorporate more exercise into your life, start with what's safe and comfortable for you.

For more expert-vetted health information tailored to your lifestyle and interests, visit www.myhealthmatters.ca.

Donate today! Giving is easy:

- **Call the Foundation at 416-323-6323.**
- **Visit www.wchf.ca and click on Ways to Give or Donate.**
- **Visit us on the 4th floor of Women's College Hospital (76 Grenville St., Toronto).**

Get in touch! We love hearing from you!

If you have any feedback about this issue of Heart & Soul, questions about donating or simply want to connect with a member of your Foundation staff team, please contact Fiona Bedlington at fiona.bedlington@wchospital.ca or 416-323-6323 ext. 2319.

To share your own story about aging and caregiving or how Women's College Hospital has made a difference in your life, contact Emily Dontosos at emily.dontosos@wchospital.ca or 416-323-6323 ext. 3798.

Stay engaged!

- Follow us on Twitter @wchf and Facebook at facebook.com/wchfdn.
- Sign up for regular e-news updates by emailing foundation@wchospital.ca.

Laura's story: Living for the loved ones she's lost

At age 29, Laura has lost almost her entire family to cancer.

After her mother passed away from pancreatic cancer, having twice survived breast cancer, Laura became determined to stop the cycle and live a long life – and to make sure future generations of her family would also have that opportunity.

In early 2014, she decided to undergo genetic testing for BRCA, a gene that dramatically increases a woman's chances of developing breast and ovarian cancer. Four weeks after her test, Laura received the call: she had tested positive.

Although it was difficult, she knew she needed to take control of her life. Laura underwent a double mastectomy at Women's College Hospital, the recommended treatment to eliminate the risk of developing breast cancer, and breast reconstruction. She was going to live – for herself, for her husband and for her family whose own lives were cut short by cancer.

"I knew that if I didn't do something, I was going to end up getting cancer," she says. "I couldn't let that happen. Women's College Hospital gave me the option to know my risk and take steps to eliminate it."

Laura and her husband, Nick, are now actively fundraising within their community to support WCH's hereditary breast and ovarian cancer research team. Laura has also started a blog, www.laurakellybrca.ca, to share her story and provide support to other women taking control of their lives through genetic testing and surgery.

To donate in support of hereditary breast and ovarian cancer research at WCH, contact Fiona Bedlington at fiona.bedlington@wchospital.ca or 416-323-6323 ext. 2319.



Grateful WCH patient Laura Kelly (R) with her mother

Congratulations, Sharon! Celebrating five years cancer-free

We are so thrilled to congratulate Sharon Newman, breast cancer survivor and WCH patient, on a huge milestone: five whole years cancer-free.

In 2011, Sharon tested positive for the BRCA gene at WCH and, shortly after, was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer. She immediately underwent a life-saving double mastectomy and reconstruction.

Today, Sharon is focused on giving back to the hospital that saved her life. She recently established The Sharon Newman Family Fund to support hereditary breast and ovarian cancer research, and is donating a portion of proceeds to WCH from her sales of Beautycounter products. Beautycounter is a line of products advocating for better regulation of ingredients that pose health risks – including cancer.

Sharon, congratulations again. You inspire us every day!

To donate in support of The Sharon Newman Family Fund, please visit wchf.convio.net/Sharon. For more information about Beautycounter, visit www.beautycounter.com/sharonnewman.



Grateful WCH patient and breast cancer survivor Sharon Newman

Thank you for your support!

WCHF is fully accredited under Imagine Canada's Standards Program. The Standards Program awards accreditation to charities and nonprofits that demonstrate excellence in five areas of operations: board governance, financial accountability, fundraising, staff management, and volunteer involvement.



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